A MARRIAGE OF REASON

MAURICE F. EGAN

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A MARRIAGE OF REASON.

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To my Wife.

THE WINTER ROSES.

The sky is like the water,
Gray as the hue of lead,
The fisher's little daughter
Weareth black upon her head;
The boughs that wave above her
Are gray with winter frost,
And all the hearts that love her
The bridge of death have crossed.

I hear no children's voices,—
Silent the fisher's maid,—
No gladsome soul rejoices
Where bold boys used to wade
In summer, in the sunlight,
When days were sweet with song,
And the wide beach was smooth and white,
Not strewn with wrecks along.

Ah, see the winter roses,
Hedged round with greenest moss,
Each curléd leaf encloses
A fragrant balm for loss;
And, though there is no breaking
Of the grayness overhead,
They teach of an awakening
Of life that is not dead.

See how they glow and quiver,
    See how they nod and bend,
While all the world's a-shiver,
    They sparks of ruby send;
Like firelight in the garden,
    Heart-shaped and red as flame,
They speak of love's sweet pardon,
    From out their mossy frame.

Ah, gray and winter weather,
    I wish your days were done,
My heart and hopes together
    Could open to the sun;
O roses, winter roses,
    I feel your lesson deep,
No gray day ever closes
    But leaves us joy to keep.

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A MARRIAGE OF REASON.

CHAPTER I.

Money.

IT could not be said that the Sherwoods underrated the value of money. Marcus Sherwood had spent the best part of his life in amassing it, and his wife had used the best part of hers in making it a factor in their social progress. But a time had come when they felt that something more than money was needed to make them happy. They had no children, and they had no religion.

It is true that Mrs. Sherwood had engaged very much in "church work." In the most desirable set in her section of Kenwood—a suburb of Philadelphia—the Protestant Episcopalians were in the ascendant. They were "Broad Church," and as Mrs. Sherwood had no particular religious dogmas, their opinions, when she could grasp them, suited her very well.

Marcus Sherwood, her husband, had gone in and out of the city every working day, except in August,

for the last twenty years. The train had generally been on time, and no accident had happened. Sometimes Mr. Sherwood had asked himself what would become of him in the other world if an accident should happen. And then he had said to himself that he would give more serious attention to religion. But later he had forgotten all about it in the excitement on Third Street; and if he remembered it at all, it was only when the buckwheat cakes in the morning gave him indigestion, or he ate too much in the evening. It must be admitted that Mr. Sherwood's serious religious moments were almost invariably connected with some slight flaw in a usually perfect state of health. Once, and once only, had he been frightened, or rather seriously awed, by the majesty of an unseen power. Sometimes he remembered it, but he generally succeeded in putting it out of his mind with all the force of his will. When his boy—since dead—had been at school, another boy had fallen into the river near the schoolhouse and been almost drowned. Mr. Sherwood had seen a priest jump into the flood,—it was a stormy day,—and with what seemed like a little black bag in his mouth, reach the fainting boy's side. The priest had done this at the imminent risk of his life. Mr. Sherwood looked at the inky waves of the wide river and shudderingly clasped his own boy's hand.

"That priest has escaped from the jaws of death," he said. "I would not take a hundred thousand dollars and swim the river as it is to-day, with the

tide in from the bay. The boy had been rescued. Why did he do it?"

"He wanted to take to him the Viaticum," said a bystander reverently.

"A mere religious rite," said Mr. Sherwood, almost with contempt. "And he risked his life to do that."

The bystander, who was an Irishman engaged at work on the river embankment, reverently took off his hat.

"It is the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mr. Sherwood started in amazement. He had seen a man risk his life, and he had heard these words uttered from the practical life around him. He looked at the ruddy young Irishman, full of life and health, full of desire no doubt for earthly happiness, working no doubt to amass money like most people, ignorant perhaps, and yet wise in a way beyond all ordinary knowledge. He was commonplace, soiled with the earth,—and yet at that moment far above the earth. Mr. Sherwood could see the kneeling figure of the priest beside the boy. He felt a strange yearning to penetrate this mystery; he felt as if he were on the outside of some great and beautiful palace, into which he had a right to enter. For a moment a strong impulse moved him to knock at the gate. He resisted it then, and ever afterwards when the same impulse arose in him he resisted it still. He was afraid to inquire further about this

mystery, — there was something so terribly fascinating about it, something so true, that he held back from it. His boy died. This had been the one great sorrow of his life, but time had made it less.

Mrs. Sherwood had more time to think than her husband. Sometimes she wondered whether there was really any authority in the world that could tell her which religion was best. She was attracted for a time by the ceremonies at St. Clement's, in the city. She had made the acquaintance of one of the ministers of that church, and had found him to be a very charming gentleman; but he seemed to think that Heaven was in some way an annex to England, and this had not quite satisfied her. His picture of the life to come was to her mind an afternoon tea among the angels, under stained-glass windows. Mrs. Sherwood, who was intensely American, had not found this congenial, though she often said she thought she would "enjoy the confessional, if one might tell all one's grievances."

But most of Mrs. Sherwood's time was spent in keeping her place in society. Unhappily she had been of no particular family. Her people had come from the West and made a little money in trade down town in Philadelphia. This was very much against her in Kenwood, where the traditions of Philadelphia ruled. In fact, Kenwood was mostly peopled by folk who could not afford to live in the proper streets in the parent city, and who constantly

lived out of town rather than run the risk of not being visited.

The Sherwoods could have lived in Spruce or Walnut or Locust Street if they wanted to, but Mrs. Sherwood felt that she would perhaps be compelled to acknowledge the inferiority of her ancestors at times, and that would not do at all. She had always lived at Kenwood; she was saturated with ideas of old Philadelphia; she had seen nothing of the outer world; and she would have given five years of her life if she could only have claimed a Biddle or a Rittenhouse as a great-grand-uncle. But, alas! such an ancestor was unattainable. This being the sad case, Mrs. Sherwood was obliged to rely entirely on the money which her husband had made in his conservative brokerage business in Third Street. But she had wild dreams of scaling the social wall which divided her from that sanctum in which the idols of old Philadelphia sat, hidden, to her imagination, by clouds of incense, and silent as Buddha.

Mrs. Sherwood bitterly regretted that her husband was not a great millionaire. If he had been, she well knew that their entrance into the sacred precincts would have been easy. As it was, money, after all, was not the ultimate object in life worth working for, she felt. She lived in a beautiful house, with a lawn that seemed as soft as velvet in the summer, and an interior as luxurious as possible in the winter. The "best people" in Kenwood

came to her dinners, her lawn parties, and her musicales. But there were social heights which she could not scale; consequently, she was unhappy. Outwardly she seemed serene, even genial at times. Nevertheless she was a disappointed woman, although she possesssed an abundance of money and of the luxuries that money could buy. She was not a vulgar woman, and yet she had all her life gauged things by their money value. Earlier, she had dreamed of her present position, and thought that when she should attain it she would be happy. She had attained it, yet she was unhappy. Her round of social dissipations did not please her now. She wanted to be greater than she was. Her husband did not understand why his wife should long so much to enter strange drawing-rooms and see strange people. He never had any social perspective, she often said. In his heart he often said that if his wife had a religion or children, she would be much happier. He and she were about fifty years of age; and he looked forward to a time when he should rest. In his heart, too, he wondered how his restless and unsatisfied wife could endure an old age by the fireside.

Sometimes now he began to think that life was a failure,—that the world, in fact, had cheated him. Had he not heard from his infancy that money would do everything? And yet money had not done much for him. In spite of an urbane and acquired manner which sat well on them both, there

were no more unhappy people in Kenwood than Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood.

One autumn morning Mrs. Sherwood had concluded to go up to the city with her husband. Shopping was her object ostensibly: to get rid of a fit of the "blues" her real object. A well-arranged equipage bore them to the station,—an equipage very bright, very graceful in form, which included two men on the box, but no coat of arms on the panel. It made Mrs. Sherwood sad to notice this omission. But her husband—though she often assured him that he must be of the Sherwoods of Sherwood Forest of Robin Hood memory—was always obdurate about the coat of arms.

"Good gracious," she said, as they started, "that O'Conor girl must be growing. She must be twenty years of age. I thought of her this morning while I was dressing; I came across her photograph as a baby in one of my boxes. It is time something was done with her."

"That's true, Anne," her husband said, raising his eyes from the financial columns of *The Ledger*; "we have neglected her."

"'Neglected' is a hard word, Marcus. We've kept her at school for over ten years, and I suppose you'll make some provision for her future."

"But we have not made a home for her, and she is my own sister's child, Anne," said her husband, gravely. "Perhaps you and I would be happier if we had some young creature in the house."

"It would depend on the young creature. I have known young creatures to be just as troublesome as old creatures."

"Really, Anne, we must have her home: if she has been at school ten years, it is time she had a home."

"What a nuisance! I am sorry I spoke of her at all!"

"I shall be glad to see her," said her husband, with a show of interest meant as a rebuke to his wife. "She is Katie's only child."

"But she will certainly be a drag on us socially. She has such a plebeian name—O'Conor! And if I remember her rightly, she had red hair when I saw her last. I don't see why Katie couldn't have married somebody besides that delicate young O'Conor,—she might have married somebody who would have helped us on, instead of a man who died as soon as he could. And of course she followed him, poor girl! But, by the way, Marcus," said his wife suddenly, as if a new and horrible thought had struck her, "Katharine O'Conor is a Catholic!"

"Well?" said her husband.

"But don't you see she will be out of touch with all our set, and there will be fasting and praying and all that sort of thing going on in the house continually. There's some distinction about being High Church, but the Catholics are so hopeless socially. One never meets them in society."

Mr. Sherwood grinned.

"Not in Kenwood; but I have met a great many."

"In a business way, of course; but you know that in this part of the world they have really no social standing. A few clever ones or rich ones do manage to get the recognition—"

"Which we are not rich enough or clever enough to deserve."

Mrs. Sherwood flushed under her veil.

"You know what I mean, Marcus."

"I am not sure; but, my dear, we must ask Katharine O'Conor to come home; it would seem like treachery to the memory of my only sister if I did not insist upon this."

Mrs. Sherwood sighed. She raised her plump hand, admirably gloved, and shaded her eyes with it. This was her habit when she was annoyed. Mrs. Sherwood, in the morning light, looked her age: her black eyes were as bright as they ever had been, but her hair, raised in the Pompadour fashion over her brow, was sprinkled with gray; her complexion somewhat reddened, and two upright wrinkles above her nose, told that her serenity of manner—much admired in social assemblies—was not altogether habitual. She caught sight of her face in the narrow glass between the windows of the carriage; and she sighed again. After all, money would not buy the best things in life. In fact, all the best things in life were above it.

"Anne, do not let us forget that what claims we have on the world have been *earned* by ourselves,"

said Mr. Sherwood. "I see no higher patent of nobility than that we began with nothing. We made money, and the money has made us," he added, with a laugh.

"Oh, money,—always money!" said his wife, contemptuously.

"But what should we do without it?" asked Marcus Sherwood, turning his good-natured, round face towards his wife with a grave look. "What have we to live for except the enjoyment of money? If I were poor I would commit suicide. And half my friends would do the same thing."

Mrs. Sherwood shuddered.

"Life would be terrible without money; but I do hope this O'Conor child will not be entirely unpresentable." And Mrs. Sherwood conjured up the picture of a short, stout girl, with freckles, a snub nose, and bad teeth, who giggled, and had no manner or manners.

"They say the Sisters give their pupils decent manners, at any rate. And of course, as she was over at Notre Dame de Sion for two years out of the ten, she must speak French with a good accent. The Sisters at Sion have, I hear, a great reputation for that sort of thing."

"At any rate, Anne," Mr. Sherwood said, with unusual firmness, "we must be kind to Katie's child."

"Haven't you paid her bills for ten years—"

"But that wasn't kindness," interrupted Mr. Sherwood; "that was only justice. I am anxious

that everything should be done for Katie's daughter that can be done. My sister saw fit to become a Catholic before she met O'Conor, and then married him, and he wasn't a bad fellow. I'm sure he would have made money if he had been given time.

"She'll spoil my dinner-parties, I'm sure," said Mrs. Sherwood, resignedly. "I don't see why we can't have relatives who would help us on socially; but they are all just a drag on us. I can't imagine a worse combination for social purposes—an ugly girl with such a pronouncedly Irish name, and a Catholic. Well, I'll write and ask her, since you insist on it."

CHAPTER II.

Our Lady of the Rosary.

KATHARINE O'CONOR'S school life had technically ended several months before Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood had held their conversation about her. But she was still to all intents and purposes a convent girl. She had been graduated, the precious medal was hers, and yet she still remained at the convent. The Commencement times had always been the most difficult for her. Everybody had warm friends, everybody had a home to go to. Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood were kind and polite when they came at very rare intervals; but Katharine was always heartily glad when the Commencement time was over. It was heart-breaking for her to see the other girls clasped in motherly arms, and hanging on to delighted fathers, with the crowns of honor as badges of victory and love. Of what use were class honors to her? Of course it pleased Mother Ursula and Sister Anselm to see her so industrious and patient, and this contented her after the Commencement time had passed. But the old desire for a mother awoke every year, and she only found relief at the foot of the statue of the

Mother of God, which stood in the little room permitted to each graduate. Now she was a post-graduate. She still wore the plain and simple uniform of the convent—black frock for all ordinary occasions, and a red or white one for gala days. The black gown did not suit her, and most strangers thought she was a very plain and commonplace girl. She was slight, and rather above the middle height; her face was ordinarily somewhat pale—a clear, healthy pallor, if one may use the word, with no hint of ill health in it. When she was interested or pleased, her face actually glowed; and her blue eyes, which were large and expressive, seemed luminous. She had the hair and eyebrows and eyelashes that go with eyes of the soft yet bright blue we know as Irish. Her voice, not naturally low, had been carefully trained musically, for she could sing well. The Sisters had done their best to make a gentlewoman from a very sweet, somewhat high-tempered, and utterly untrained little girl.

She was not ungrateful; but it was natural that she should occasionally sigh for the world beyond the lodge gates of the convent. She had not read many novels: she had given her word to Mother Ursula that she would read only such novels as Mother Ursula approved of; and the novels that passed the censorship of the Superior were few in number. Nevertheless they were of high literary merit, for Mother Ursula was not one of those who believed that morality should necessarily be taught

in bad English. Katharine had kept her word, for she was scrupulously honorable. Some of her companions often insisted that if a thing were not an actual sin, there was no harm in it; but Katharine never admitted such an opinion. She was both honest and honorable.

Katharine had not—let me whisper it in these days of higher education—read Cicero or the Odes of Horace; she knew little about theoretical or applied science; she could not dissect a locomotive to save her life; and, although she knew the chemical constituents of water, she had never troubled her mind with much deeper knowledge of that kind. She liked to read, and to read with a purpose; she knew how to apply herself to mental work, but the Sisters had cultivated in her the power of concentration rather than of dissipation. In Katharine's case they had not been trammelled by any interference on the part of ignorant or half-educated parents.

When Mrs. Sherwood's letter came Katharine was engaged in the pleasant task of providing for one of those little festivals that diversify the quiet of convent school life. There was to be a feast in honor of Mother Ursula's recovery from a short illness. Katharine was putting all her heart into the construction of a garland of red roses intended to be worn by one of the characters in a Roman banquet scene. She was as full of delighted anticipation as if she were one of the small girls just entering school. But this fled as she read Mrs. Sherwood's letter.

She dropped the red petals on the floor, regardless of her well-established principles of order, and ran to Mother Ursula's room.

Mother Ursula was short, and a trifle stout, but she moved with exquisite grace, and there was a perpetual brightness in her face which was a stimulus to all around her, even on the rainiest of rainy days.

"Well, Katharine," she said, looking up from a pile of letters on the table before her, "well, my dear?"

"I am to go home, Mother—that is, to Kenwood," said Katharine, expecting to see something dreadful happen. Would Mother swoon? Would Mother cry out at this piece of news of such awful importance?

"Sit down, dear," said Mother Ursula calmly. "I, too, have had a letter from Mrs. Sherwood—and you are to leave us at last!"

Katharine could hardly believe the evidence of her senses. Did Mother Ursula actually realize that she was going? Her own eyes were full of tears and her heart was throbbing.

"O Mother," she said, "it is so terrible to go out into the wild world—and you do not seem to mind it at all! Oh, dear! I am alone—all alone! I can't go!"

Mother Ursula looked at her with alert, bright eyes.

"But, Katharine," she said, "how are we to keep you here unless you have a vocation? One must choose between the two paths."

"I know—I know, and I'm sure I wish I had a vocation; I'm sure I've prayed enough."

"How can we tell when we have prayed enough?" asked Mother Ursula. "'Enough' is a great word when we apply it to prayer."

"I believe you are glad to get rid of me, Mother Ursula," exclaimed Katharine, beginning to cry.

"Sit down, dear," said the Sister, in a very sweet voice; "we have been your mother and father and brothers and sisters, and we love you, Katharine—you do not doubt that?"

Katharine kept her face covered with her hands; she did not answer, but shook her head negatively.

"Ah, you do not mean that," continued Mother Ursula, rising and taking her hand. "I do not fear that you do not understand our love for you, but I do fear that you may forget our lessons."

"Oh, no! But why can't I stay? It is heart-breaking."

Mother Ursula knew that Katharine was entirely sincere. At the same time she was too well versed in the hearts of young girls without vocation for the religious life not to know that Katharine would be anxious enough to go, if the sisters insisted that she should remain.

"If I were going home, it would be different,—but I am only going to strangers."

"Still, you owe them gratitude and duties."

"I suppose I do, but it is very hard," sobbed Katharine. "How can I bear it?"

Mother Ursula simply put the crucifix of her rosary into Katharine's hand. There was silence, broken only by Katharine's sobs. Mother Ursula felt that it was hard—harder than Katharine understood it to be at that moment, for the girl had not yet begun to realize that the world is not what it seems to young eyes.

"You will write often," Mother Ursula said. "We will pray a great deal for you. You are our child, you know; and if any great affliction should come to you, remember there is a refuge here."

Kathleen kissed Mother Ursula's hand, and still sobbed. The interview ended with this. Katharine went out to communicate the news to her friends among the Sisters and pupils. How sweet and serene and home-like every place seemed—the old maples near the river, the mass of lilacs bordering the grounds! How was it that she had ever longed to leave this spot, which had been so closely interwoven with her life? And yet many a time she had declared that she would no longer endure the many rules of the convent, which, like a network, covered every day. What a strong, firm network it had been, and how gently it had supported characters which never would have become strong without it!

Mother Ursula was not solicitous about the things of this world. She was a good woman of business,—and certainly the management of convent schools might be well quoted as examples of what women can do in business,—and yet she relied very much

on prayer. The Rosary had extricated her from difficulties which her lawyer had declared to be insurmountable, and there had been a time when her Beads and a large debt had been all she possessed in the world; and yet there was no more flourishing school than that of Our Lady of the Rosary, at present. St. Joseph had removed many obstacles for her, and she trusted much in his intercession; and she entreated it earnestly for Katharine, the "lily maid," the one she loved best of all her flock. Little did Katharine dream that she had so large a part in Mother Ursula's heart.

Katharine soon began to find a certain luxury in her grief. Little Maria Rodrigues, the dusky Cuban, of whom Katharine had made a special pet, because she was an orphan like herself, came running into the corridor.

"O Maria!" cried Katharine, "I am going to ask *congé* for you to-morrow, for it will be my last day."

"You are going?" said the little Cuban, putting her head one side, like a bird. "I will go too, because I am your little girl—Mother Ursula said so. We will go to Cuba! Oh, yes, we will cross the sea and come back in the summer!"

"But I must leave you awhile. I must go alone; but I will send you a doll, and come back for you."

The alarm in the little Cuban's eyes, which had gathered at the first words, gave place to pleasure.

"A doll! Oh, yes—a *señorita* with a blue cloak and a hat and feathers. But I have torn my veil, and it is nearly time to go to the church."

Katharine understood this to mean that she was to mend the little Maria's veil, which was torn, as a rule, four times a day.

"Sister Gonzaga told me to ask you to mend it," said the little one, with a smile, "but I was almost afraid; you scolded me last time."

"I shall never scold you again," said Katharine, choking down a sob.

"How nice!" cried Maria, getting into the wooden seat where Katharine had bestowed herself, to take the sewing implements from her pocket. "And you will send me a doll—a *señorita*, remember, with a parasol. And you will come back soon! And you will see the beautiful world—I saw it when I came here with my aunt. You will see Broadway!"

A slight gleam of consolation shot across Katharine's gloom; there might be some brightness in store for her, after all. Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood had seemed to her cold and distant, and very fashionable. She had always associated the scent of heliotrope with haughtiness and coldness, since Mrs. Sherwood was always perfumed with it. But still there would be doubtless much to see in the world; and so the careless prattle of Maria took all the sting out of her woe, and left only the luxury of grief.

Mrs. Sherwood had asked rather peremptorily that Katharine might go at once, as she wanted to fit her

out for a coming-out party, "and, I presume," she wrote, "that both Katharine's attire and her manners need some brushing up for the great world."

Mother Ursula, who had been in a much greater world than Kenwood, smiled a little at this, and it was decided that Katharine should not even wait for the feast in honor of Mother Ursula's recovery, but go at once.

It was very sweet to Katharine to find that everybody loved her so. The next day—and this was a most unusual thing—*congé* was given; and for that day Katharine was a great heroine.

The gifts that came pouring into her room were various. Maria Rodrigues, who clung to her skirts wherever she went, brought a box of guava jelly, with one or two spoonfuls out—"just to taste it, you know," Maria explained. Esmerald Philomena McBride, the proudest girl in the school, who was always telling everybody how long her mother's sealskin sacque was, gave her a small woolen strawberry full of needles. This was much admired, as Esmerald's taste was popularly supposed to be exquisite, and Esmerald was always talking about it. Mother Ursula presented a plain little Rosary that could be carried anywhere, and Sister Gonzaga a lace picture of St. Katharine of Sienna. After this there was numbered all manner of gifts, from a bottle of olives, a hair bracelet, and a drawing of the convent, to two links of Bologna sausage presented by Cunagunda Schwartzmeyer, a very small girl from Mil-

waukee, who enclosed her gift in an elaborate bonbon box. Katharine showed the most enthusiastic gratitude to Cunagunda, and promised to eat the tidbit on her way home.

The last Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel was the saddest of all the last scenes for Katharine. Then and there it came upon her, without alleviation, that she should never be one of the white-veiled groups that awaited the sweet and awful moment when the chaplain should raise his Lord aloft above them! Leaving the chapel, she felt *alone*,—so many beautiful links seemed broken all at once from the chain of her life.

At last the carriage rolled up the drive, and Katharine, loaded with flowers, kissed her way to the door, followed by Sister Carmelita, who was to act as her chaperon as far as Ronaldsburg, where Mrs. Sherwood intended to meet her.

"Good-by!" called nearly two hundred voices.

"Duty!" whispered Mother Ursula.

The driver snapped his whip, and the carriage turned away from Our Lady of the Rosary.

CHAPTER III.

A Blessing.

KATHARINE passed through many phases of feeling on her journey towards Kenwood. Was the world so wicked as people said? Was it so delightful as it appeared? She half-shrank from the threshold of it, and yet the thought of it fascinated her.

She would not have been young if the prospect of a change was without attraction for her. She would not have been young if the heroic in life did not seem very near to her. She lost herself in a dream, in which she saw herself as the benefactress of Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood. They had lost their fortune; they were abjectly poor; they depended on her. Then Katharine saw herself rise to the occasion and —she did not settle in her dream by what means— make them independently rich. Her conduct—she settled in her mind that she would have many trials —would of course move their hearts, they would become Catholics, and be truly grateful to her.

This building of castles in Spain was not encouraged at Our Lady of the Rosary; but Katharine was out of bounds now, and might be excused for it

because of her unusual exaltation of feeling. Mr. Sherwood had insisted that Katharine should travel with all possible comforts; so she and her *chaperon* had the drawing-room compartment of the car, and a luncheon that seemed very luxurious to them both.

It was delightful to the emancipated school-girl to think that she might have a "long sleep" every day in the week if she liked. No getting up at the sound of the imperious bell now! But the anticipation of this indulgence, the value of which can best be appreciated by the convent-school girl, faded as she thought of poor little Maria Rodrigues. Between smiles and tears the day passed. The Sister who accompanied her told her beads, and Katharine tried to pay attention to her dear friend, the rosary; but her attention was so constantly distracted by some new thing that she reproached herself sometimes for her inattention. Finally she put the beads away, resolving to make up for it in her berth when night should come.

She heartily wished that her uncle had not been so careful of her comfort. She heard voices in the narrow passage that led past the compartment, and she longed to see who the possessors of them were. It was a great thing to be in the world, and she wanted to see its people.

On the next morning the Sister said good-by to her. She was to meet another Sister, who was going westward, and to go home with her. Fortunately, before she reached this station, her mind was relieved

of certain tremulous doubts—for the Sister had an old-fashioned prejudice against girls travelling alone —by the entrance of an old gentleman and an elderly lady. The old gentleman had a tired look. It was easy to see that he had been ill. The old lady, on the contrary, was bright and gay. She fussed about him, nearly smothered him in a way, and regulated the light carefully. The Sister watched the couple anxiously through the glass door.

"I believe that is Mr. and Mrs. Percival," she said. "I wish I were sure. I could leave you with a clear conscience if they would look after you."

Katharine laughed. "I fancy I shall have to travel alone many times before I die, Sister. Oh, don't trouble yourself about me. Just meet Sister Teresa and go back, leaving me in charge of your prayers."

The Sister did not answer. She continued her scrutiny.

"It *is* the Percivals."

"Do ask them if I may sit with them. It is livelier out there. I really do want to see the people."

After a time the old lady rose, and came towards the compartment with a glass in her hand.

As she passed their door, the Sister arose and said :

"Mrs. Percival!"

The old lady paused, looking surprised.

"Why, Helen Banfort! little Helen, I hardly knew you in your nun's habit. How glad I am to see you!"

The old lady's brown eyes fairly danced with gladness.

"You must come out to see Edward. He has been ill," she said, lowering her voice. "He is no nearer the Church than he was, Helen, when I married him thirty-five years ago. I hope you all pray hard for me at Our Lady of the Rosary."

"Indeed we do," said the Sister. "Will you let me present Miss O'Conor, one of our pupils?"

Mrs. Percival became a trifle colder. She looked at Katharine with a critical eye. Katharine rose and bowed. Mrs. Percival liked her at once, and, instead of merely shaking hands, kissed her on both cheeks.

"She is going to Philadelphia, and I must leave her at the next station. Would you be so kind—"

"Of course," said Mrs. Percival, very heartily, "of course. We are going to Philadelphia, too. Edward and I shall be all the brighter for the presence of a pupil from the old convent. Come, Helen, I hope you will let me forget your religious name for a few minutes. It brings back old times. Sister and I," she said, turning to Katharine, "were schoolgirls together. And yet how young she looks!"

"You cannot see *my* hair," said the Sister, smiling.

"If you want to keep young," said Mrs. Percival, "I can give you a cosmetic, my dear,—enter a religious community."

Katharine laughed softly, and Mrs. Percival, who was a woman of strong prejudices, liked her better than ever.

The introductions to Mr. Percival were soon over. It was evident from his manner that he was a man of prejudices, too. He looked with scarcely-concealed dislike at the snowy robe of the Sister, and turned to Katharine with visible relief on his face. Katharine, with that sensitive quickness which was part of her temperament, read his thoughts. She pitied him, and then a great dread came over her that she might do or say something that would sharpen his prejudices. She had been warned over and over again at the convent of the immense value of words. "A word is a winged seed," Mother Ursula had often said: "the seed of a flower or of a poisonous weed." Katharine touched the rosary she had twisted about her wrist, and felt stronger. Mother Ursula might have smiled—with a tear in the smile perhaps—if she had known how heavily Katharine felt the responsibility of her words.

The conversation flagged after the Sister and Katharine settled themselves in the seat opposite to that of the Percivals. Mrs. Percival was evidently somewhat nervous, and her husband uneasy. The Sister's habit was plainly an annoyance to him. At last the humor of the sudden silence seemed to strike Mrs. Percival.

"Are you thinking of the Inquisition, Edward?" and she laughed.

The old gentleman looked confused. He had been thinking of the Inquisition.

"I wish you wouldn't say such things, Margaret," he said; "I really wish you wouldn't."

Mrs. Percival laughed again, a low, trilling laugh, that brought a smile even to her husband's lips.

"Come now, Edward,—just remember that this is my old Helen Banfort, and try to think that her habit is the symbol of a life that is better than ours. If she should produce a thumb-screw, remember that *I* am here to protect you."

Mr. Percival laughed in spite of himself, and Katharine joined in it. They were friends from that moment. She laughed again. It was too funny to think of the gentle Sister Carmelita with a thumb-screw!

Mr. Percival unbent a little, and remarked that the means of travelling had improved. At the same time he looked at the serene face of Sister Carmelita, and wondered what secrets she might be concealing. Katharine's expression disarmed him. His only child, a little girl, had died when a baby. He asked himself whether she would have grown up to be as fair and good as Katharine looked to be.

In a short time Sister Carmelita was obliged to go; she had reached her station. Poor Katharine clung to her to the last, and Mr. Percival found his eyes grow somewhat hazy as he watched the parting.

At last she went. For a long time Mr. Percival did not look at her. He kept his eyes fixed on a book about Mexico he was reading. He was a man of almost invincible prejudices; but when his heart was touched his prejudices flew away like swallows disturbed.

He did not believe in convent education. To be sure, his wife had been convent-bred, but she was an exception. He was of the opinion that girls ought to be brought up to fight the world; he often talked of higher female education, and delighted in discussing the discoveries that might yet be made in the sciences by women. He was violently opposed to Sisters or Nuns of every description, and he became the more violently fixed in his prejudices from the constant warfare his wife carried on for them. Here was a specimen of a convent-school girl, he said to himself, fresh from the hot-house: he would study, and show his wife through the results of this study, that he was right.

Mrs. Percival watched Katharine, too; she felt herself drawn to the young girl. After awhile, when Katharine had dropped a tear or two, she spoke:

"I imagine you will find kind friends to replace the nuns," she said.

"Never," said Katharine, "never! You don't know what they have been to me. I shall count the days until I can get back to the convent again."

Mrs. Percival smiled. "I thought so once myself, but I found other interests."

"Ah, no interests will ever fill my life as the interests of the convent did!"

Mr. Percival, with his eyes fixed on his book, made a mental note of this for the confusion of his wife at some future time;—the girl evidently cared nothing for home; the Sisters had alienated her

affections from her parents. "Bad! bad!" he grunted to himself.

Mrs. Percival heard the grunt and felt uncomfortable.

"Never mind, my dear," she said, "enjoy the present; you are young and the day is pleasant; when you see your mother or father you will forget the nuns."

"I have no mother or father," said Katharine; "perhaps if I had it would be different; but I have never known any home but the convent."

Mr. Percival looked up from his book. And this girl, who seemed so gentle and graceful, whose every tone was modulated, who attracted him by her well-bred air and sensible face, had "known no home but the convent." He would await developments, however. After all, he was probably deceived by appearances. Mrs. Percival felt that she might possibly add to Katharine's sadness by speaking; she was silent.

The newsboy came through the car with a package of books. Mr. Percival raised his eyes again; he would see what this girl would want to read,—some trash, no doubt. The newsboy poised his package on the arm of Katharine's seat; it was made up of the usual vile and vulgar stuff, which the law should prohibit. Katharine cast her eyes over the names of the books; she shrank back from them.

"No, thank you," she said; and then she stopped him as he was going away: "I wish you would

bring me 'The Angel of the House,' by Coventry Patmore. Sister Carmelita recommended it to us," she said, turning to Mrs. Percival.

Mr. Percival almost laughed. The verdancy of expecting such a book on a railway train. The newsboy stared.

"Never heard of it," he said. "Have Ouida, Daudet, Zola's last—"

"Stop!" said Mr. Percival; "that's enough."

The boy passed on.

"I have a long list of books which I must read. I am trying to study the social question a little, and I am anxious to get half a dozen books on the subject. Mother Ursula encouraged me; she said that one might imitate St. Elizabeth of Hungary by finding out how to help poor people, by discovering the causes of their poverty, and how to alleviate it intelligently."

Mr. Percival smiled. These were strange words from a convent-school girl!

"A-ah," he said, "you have taken up the idea that women have missions, too. I didn't think they taught such things in convents."

Katharine looked at him very seriously.

"I don't remember that Mother Ursula ever used the word 'mission,' but she taught us that the great thing in life is to help other people, and she read to us much that the Count de Mun has written on the social question. She said that each girl ought to choose some special study and work, and I took—"

There was a sudden jar. The train came to a standstill. Mr. Percival turned white; there was always in his mind the fear of death. "Had it come?" he asked himself. His wife screamed. Katharine made the sign of the cross. She looked out the window and saw a broken buggy by the roadside, and a little child lying white and still. It took her only a few seconds to reach the platform and to descend to the ground. She reached the little thing before either the conductor or porter could approach it. She took it in her arms. The yellow ringlets, soft, and of the color of the daffodil, were in disorder; the long black lashes covered the eyes; the little heart throbbed, but faintly; the lids lifted a moment and revealed soft, blue eyes, with a look of appeal in them. The child seemed to be about two years of age, not more.

Katharine saw its color changing to ashy white and bore it into the car. She was followed by a woman, dazed-looking and dishevelled, with a cut on her forehead from which the blood was dripping. Katharine turned to her, unheeding the group on the platform, among which were the Percivals.

"Was the child baptized?" she asked.

"No, no!" moaned the woman. "Oh, my sweet, little girl!"

Katharine pushed her way gently to the dressing-case and filled a glass with water. Even Mr. Percival felt his heart thrill with awe as he saw her pour the water on the head of the child, while she

clearly pronounced the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!"

The mother of the child burst into sobs, as Katharine gently laid the baby in her arms. The little girl opened her eyes again, smiled at her mother, and gently passed away.

"Oh, God bless you!" cried the mother, turning to Katharine, "God bless you!—No, I am not hurt much," she said to the conductor; "I must go home, it is not far!"

Katharine gave her a handkerchief and a bottle of cologne, and she went away in charge of one of the railroad hands. The train moved on; but not until the passengers had heard the long, piteous wail of the mother, as she realized that her child was really dead.

Mrs. Percival kissed Katharine again, and her husband looked at the girl with new respect.

CHAPTER IV.

A Social Question.

MRS. PERCIVAL and the Sherwoods did not move in the same social set. In fact, the Sherwoods were, in Mrs. Percival's estimation, very inferior people. Why, no creature not born in Philadelphia could tell; but the reason of it was sufficiently plain to Mrs. Percival.

Mrs. Sherwood, too, admitted it with anguish; the grandfathers of Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood were unknown to the compiler of Watson's *Annals*—that record of the new aristocracy of the Quaker City—and, consequently, there was a great social gulf between them and Mrs. Percival, whose grandfather had been a highly esteemed clerk in the Bank of which Nicholas Biddle was president, and whose grand-aunt had married a relative of Benedict Arnold. This, in Philadelphia, gave Mrs. Percival a most important position. She had gone to the far West for a time with her husband, who had large interests at Duluth, and it was expected that her return to Philadelphia would be signalized by a very brilliant season of afternoon teas and dinner parties. She had taken a house in one of the streets within

the visiting limits of the best people, and her coming arrival had been heralded in all the papers.

If Katharine had been a young woman of the world, she would have been grateful for the good fortune of having been able to make the acquaintance of this distinguished social magnate. But her education in the convent had taught her to be simple and pure and kind; she knew very little of social distinctions, and she was entirely deficient in the art of giving pain in a polite way, so well studied by even younger girls than herself, in that gay world which looks on convent education as narrow.

Mrs. Percival was not unaware of her own social importance in the city of her birth, but she had travelled too much to overrate it; she knew how little it counted in other places; nevertheless she was inclined to make the most of it. In spite of her strong faith and her devotion to the Church, Mrs. Percival was very worldly: and, if she had known it, this defect was the chief obstacle in the way of the removal of her husband's prejudices against the Church.

Apparently, Mr. Percival was indifferent and at times bigoted; in reality, he was anxious to know and to be convinced; he admired in his heart many of the beauties of his wife's religion, but he could not believe that it was to her what she said it was; since, after her return from an early Mass—at which she had asssisted on a winter's morning at the expense of her health, in his opinion—she would coldly "cut"

an undesirable acquaintance who presumed to bow to her, and show an iciness in words toward her neighbors, that made Mr. Percival fancy that her faith was inadequate to affect all her works. Again, she was quite willing to join in his uncharitable jibes at people, and sometimes to meet his ill temper with ill temper. He knew he was wrong in doing these things, and he expected her to be better than he was. So long as her conduct corresponded with his, he said to himself that her religion could really be no better than his want of religion. He had been quick to recognize Katharine's simplicity and charitableness; and her utter regardlessness of her surroundings, her tenderness of look and gesture to the poor little child, her evident faith, and the gratitude of the mother, made him feel grateful to have met her. Mrs. Percival was touched, too, but when she began to explain in an apologetic way how absolutely necessary the Sacrament of Baptism was, Mr. Percival listened impatiently.

"Your words spoil it all, my dear," he said; "I saw that it was a matter of life and death by the young woman's manner and the mother's gratitude. I hope you will find out with whom Miss O'Conor is staying, if she is going to Philadelphia, and invite her to our house."

Mrs. Percival looked perplexed.

"I don't know that an acquaintance like this ought to be continued, you know; she is a very sweet girl, but her people may be hopeless—"

"You mean that they may live below Pine Street or above Callowhill, or wherever your foolish lines extend," said Mr. Percival, with irritation; "and you are willing to miss the chance of seeing more of that sweet, young creature, simply because of such idiotic nonsense. And she's a Catholic, too!"

"One can't invite every Catholic one knows to one's dinner parties—"

"But I should think you might ask the nice ones —I am sure they are few and far between, and when you find one you ought to make the most of it."

Mrs. Percival's color rose.

"Catholics are just as good socially as—"

"I don't intend to quarrel about it," said her husband, wearily, "and I hate all this 'social' talk. That's the reason I liked Duluth. Nobody seemed to have any 'social position' there; it was all a question of corner lots. Now here's a nice young woman—the kind of young woman I'd like to have for a daughter. Anybody can see sincerity in her face, and I've not heard such a soft voice in an age. You are very kind to her until we get near Philadelphia, and then an inhuman spirit of calculation takes posession of you. 'Mighty Mrs. Grundy,' you say to yourself; 'she may perhaps live in South Street.' I presume that, by the time we get nearer to the City of Brotherly Love, you will 'cut her dead.'"

Mrs. Percival bit her lip.

"I thought you were not fond of Catholics."

"I have always been very fond of *you*," he said, with a slight smile. "I like anybody that does right; I like unspoiled people; you've often told me that I am a man of prejudices, and so I am; but when they give away once,—they're gone!—that's all!"

Mrs. Percival said nothing. It astonished her to see that her husband was affected by Katharine's faith; she had imagined that the girl's act in baptizing the little child would have prejudiced him against her. She liked Katherine herself; but she had no intention of embarrassing herself with an acquaintance who might not belong to her own social sphere; she made a practice of knowing nobody who was not invited to the annual dance, given every year under the name of the Assembly. It had become, as she admitted, "frightfully mixed" of late; but still it was not altogether promiscuous. The fact that Katharine was travelling in a special compartment was not pleasant to Mrs. Percival. She was probably of some newly rich family, and Mrs. Percival abhorred such folk. The newly poor might be nice, but the newly rich never could be, in her estimation.

Katharine came out of the compartment where she had arranged her hair, somewhat disordered by her hasty action. The brightness of her face almost caused Mrs. Percival to forget her doubts. As for Mr. Percival he welcomed her warmly. Mrs. Percival said in her heart that there was no understanding

men. Here was her husband, the most bigoted of mortals, suddenly showing the greatest interest in a young stranger, whose principal claim to his attention was that she had showed herself a devout Catholic! Mrs. Percival resolved to go straight to the point.

"Are you going to Philadelphia, Miss O'Conor?"

"No," answered Katharine, "I am to get off at Ronaldsburg; I am to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood."

Mrs. Percival groaned in spirit. The Sherwoods! rich, new people, whose sole aim for five years had been to get into that exclusive set of which she was a leading member. Much as she liked the girl, she could not ask her to visit her, because, in that case, she would have to call on Mrs. Sherwood; and no doubt the artful creatures would be only too glad to crawl into the best set in Philadelphia by means of this very charming girl. Mrs. Percival made up her mind hastily; she really could not afford to know Katharine—she really could not!

Mr. Percival frowned; he read his wife's thoughts. It seemed strange to him that so good a woman should be so hopelessly tyrannized by senseless rules; but he said nothing; he moved restlessly, and his cushions became disarranged. Katharine repaired the accident very gently and deftly. In so doing, her rosary fell near Mr. Percival; he picked it up and looked at it.

"It is like my wife's," he said.

"I am sure I have tried to explain to you all about it over and over again," Mrs. Percival said, "but you will *not* learn."

"Perhaps if I had one of my own—" said Mr. Percival, smiling.

"Oh, yes,—keep it," said Katharine, "and I am sure you will love it very much; when I am sick it helps me so much, and I always get everything I ask for—"

"You do?" said the old gentleman, smiling.

Mrs. Percival looked annoyed. This school-girl prattle would be alluded to later, she felt sure, by her husband as "superstition." If girls could only be taught to hold their tongues!

"We are near Ronaldsburg," she said.

Katharine started; the tears came into her eyes; she would have given the world to be back at the convent, but there was no turning back now. The future suddenly became dark, and even the Percivals seemed, as she was leaving them, to be old friends. The porter came up obsequiously—she must go! She shook Mr. Percival's hand and kissed his wife, her eyes glistening with tears.

"She *is* a nice girl!" said Mrs. Percival, as she passed out; "and there's the carriage of those upstarts, the Sherwoods—two men on the box and a blazing coat-of-arms. It's disgusting! Poor child, I hope she will not suffer from her surroundings!"

Mr. Percival laughed. "It seems a pretty place, and that was certainly a fine carriage. She'll survive

her drawbacks I hope, and I intend to be kind to her if I should meet her anywhere."

"We'll not meet anywhere. Why, nobody in Philadelphia knows the Sherwoods."

"How absurd you are! One would think that your experience would have made you less narrow-minded. Mr. Sherwood is highly respected; he is a model of integrity."

"Oh, that only applies to business. Besides, he kept a retail shop not fifteen years ago in Front Street somewhere."

"I can only repeat that your ideas are as old-fashioned as they are unreasonable."

"Not more so than your ideas on religion!" snapped Mrs. Percival.

"Ah, well," said her husband, with a sigh, "I think if we had a daughter like the little girl that just left us, I might begin to see what is underneath all your ceremonies."

Mrs. Percival was in a wretched frame of mind. The only evils to be really feared in this world are those we bring on ourselves, either by our weakness or viciousness. Mrs. Percival had generally the consolation in the disputes with her husband of believing that he was entirely in the wrong. But she felt that, in this instance, he had honesty and sincerity on his side. Miss O'Conor might help her to make him understand the true beauty of the Church; but even for that she could not "take up" those odious Sherwoods! People with a coat-of-arms

which did not belong to them, and a crest no doubt picked up at Dreka's—people who were not even clever enough not to appear new. How would it look if they should have to be invited to Mr. Percival's country-seat, when she should have her next garden-party! Positively, all Philadelphia would laugh, if she, the exclusive of exclusives, should allow their names to appear in *The Ledger* among her guests,—no, she could not think of it. And yet she knew she was wrong; but nobody but a woman, brought up in her narrow social atmosphere, can imagine the extent of the sacrifice it needed for her to become right.

"Besides, suppose Wirt were to take a fancy to this unknown young girl!" she said. William Wirt Percival was her husband's nephew.

"It would be much to his credit!" cried Mr. Percival, closing his lips tight. "Or," he added, with a touch of malice, "suppose your brother Ferdinand should admire her sufficiently to propose to her!"

Mrs. Percival turned white; her husband had struck home. She resented his allusion to the skeleton in the closet. She said to herself that "marriage was a failure," and he irritably murmured that "women were fools." She dared not pray, for she knew she was wrong, and he did not know how; and so they rode on in silence, until the great dome of the Cathedral came into view; then she spoke to him about the baggage.

CHAPTER V.

"That Girl!"

RONALDSBURG was the nearest station to Kenwood, on the railroad line which had brought Katharine from Our Lady of the Rosary. At the last moment, Mrs. Sherwood had remembered that her Browning Society would meet, and she had merely sent the carriage to Ronaldsburg, and not even her own carriage, for she needed that herself, but an equally elegant neighbor's—hence Mrs. Percival did her wrong when she attributed a coat-of-arms to her.

Katharine stood for a moment on the platform, feeling very much alone. One of the men jumped off the box, tipped his hat, and asked if she were Miss O'Conor. At this moment two young men who were standing under the shadow of the ornamental gable of the station approached. Katharine did not notice them; if she had, she would have seen that one was handsome, the other distinguished looking. One was Wirt Percival; the other, Ferdinand Carey. They had ridden to Ronaldsburg, in the hope of seeing the Percivals and of inducing them to stop at Wirt's country-house.

Wirt Percival was, in appearance, so excessively English that one would have imagined that he had dropped from the atmosphere of that "tight little island," just as he was. He was very blonde, with a straight nose that Du Maurier might have drawn, a long back, and he effected a great stride when he walked. He wore an ill-fitting suit of gray tweed, with Knickerbockers, and carried a heavy whip. His face was genial and bright; but his wide-open blue eyes seemed to have no depths in them.

Ferdinand Carey was dressed with great care. His tall hat was almost too glossy; the lapel of his long frock coat was adorned with a bunch of stephanotis, and a very evident crease was visible in his gray trousers. He was tall and slight, with features rather large and irregular; he looked tired and uninterested; but when his dark eyes rested on Katharine he suddenly seemed alert.

"A new beauty, Wirt," he said, "who can she be? —she is going to get into the Parkes' carriage. Who can she be?"

"Don't know," Wirt answered, with a drawl. "She looks smart,—haven't seen a smarter walk than that for some time,—walks like an English girl."

While the man was looking after Katharine's luggage, Mr. Wirt Percival tried to discover who she was. But the coachman trained to silence, gave no information. He had absolutely nothing to do, for he had started to follow at Ronaldsburg what he

fondly believed was the career of an English country gentleman. Ronaldsburg was a quite place, and a new arrival made an epoch; Ferdinand, who was a partner in a commission firm on Front Street, had merely run up in the hope of meeting his sister. Ferdinand had special reasons for being fond of his sister,—she knew a secret which gave him great pain, and in her only could he confide. Just at this time, he was anxious indeed to see her, for an important crisis had come in his life. He was tired of his present life, unhappy, anxious. It was very well to lead "germans"—no man in Philadelphia knew how to make a cotillon go better than Ferdinand Carey, —very well to be almost a necessary guest at all important dinners, very well to have a pedigree which approached the great shade of Nicholas Biddle; but this was not sufficient. He was rich enough, healthy enough, and he had written a little book of poems which had gone through two editions. In fact, some of the best Philadelphians had been heard to say that he might some day be as great as Mr. Boker; but all this was not enough; he was unhappy. The sight of Katharine's pure, young face startled him for a moment out of his habitual mood. He sunk into it again. What right had he to gaze at such a face?

"I don't see anything for me, except suicide," he said to himself, "and by Jove, I'll do it sooner or later!"

Wirt Percival, in the meantime, saw with delight that Katharine had dropped a little vinaigrette, one of the school gifts. The man was just shutting the carriage door when Wirt stopped him.

"Permit me, Miss—ah—Miss—" he said, standing near the step. He paused, with the vinaigrette in his hand. Katharine saw at once that he wanted to know her name. Her face glowed and her eyes lighted up; he seemed a very queer figure to her, for she had never had the privilege of seeing an English-American country gentleman in the attire he assumes when he rides over his estates.

"Thank you," she said, taking the crystal bottle. "You are very kind."

She smiled again, and the carriage drove off. He felt that he looked blank, and he thought that there was just a tinge of mischief in her smile.

"What a voice!" he said: "she must be English, —American girls don't have voices like that. And she must be of a good family or else she would have taken the hint and flirted a little. Too bad!—don't suppose we'll meet her,—the Parkes are not one of the county families, you know."

Ferdinand laughed sardonically.

"Oh, bother, your county families!—you'll never succeed in introducing that kind of exclusiveness here. People like to play with English fashions, but they don't and won't take them seriously,—she really looks like a smart girl, and her dress fits her so badly, that she may possibly be English;—you'll

meet her at some of the large assemblies, to which the Parkes, the Sherwoods and that sort of people are asked; so don't worry."

"The idea of a creature like that going to the Parkes'—why the Parkes are nobody. Old Parke sold codfish at retail not five years ago,—where did they pick her up?"

"Nonsense! Be sensible and natural,—I'm in the fruit business, and everybody—"

"But it's wholesale," said Wirt, eagerly, "and you've a pedigree!"

"I've been told so often enough,—but we both know it's all bosh. Come, Wirt," he said, wearily, "let's get home. My sister would probably have stopped, if we had got here in time,—and I am sorry we didn't; as it is, let us go home."

The two mounted their horses. Wirt pulled his cap over his eyes, and put a briarwood pipe between his teeth. He was silent. After they had ridden half a mile, he said.

"Believe that girl was laughing at me!"

"What girl?"

"Oh, *that* girl."

"Probably."

This was the only answer Ferdinand made; and Wirt did not get much consolation out of it. They drew up in front of a square, old house, stuccoed in faded yellow, and adorned with a façade and Corinthian pillars. The lawns around were as perfectly kept as the lawns of Pennsylvanian country-houses

generally are. They had been cultivated more carefully than flowers, and they were softer in color than emeralds, and even softer than velvet to the tread.

Wirt had inherited Bolingbroke; the place had been called for the false philosopher who formed Voltaire and misled poor Pope. It was a large estate, well-wooded, beautifully diversified, such a place as, in this country, is found only in that State where

"All the air is balm, and the peach is the emblem of beauty."

The interior of the house had been modernized. The old floors, on which the minuet had been danced, had been straightened and waxed until they shone, and the old marble chimney-pieces carefully restored. But all the coldness and barrenness of the colonial idea of interior architecture had been destroyed by Wirt's love of color; rich draperies hung everywhere, statuettes, old lamps, stained glass, and Japanese curios,—the spoil of many European journeys.

It struck five o'clock as they entered. The wide hall glowed with the light of a fire in the open grate.

"Ah, this is charming," said Ferdinand with a sigh, as he threw himself into an arm-chair covered with the skin of a Japanese goat. A man came in bearing a tray, on which was tea for Wirt and a glass of sherry for Ferdinand.

"There was no pearl powder about *her*," said Wirt, thoughtfully, standing with his back to the fire in the approved English fashion.

"Who?"

"Oh, *her!*" responded Wirt, impatiently.

"It is comfortable here," said Ferdinand. "What a pleasure it is to have a home!"

"Why don't you build a house of your own?"

Ferdinand's olive-colored face seemed to grow darker.

"What would be the use? What is a house without a wife and children,—what is it?"

"Yes, what is it?" said Wirt, looking about at all his luxury. "That's just what I've been thinking. I've been everywhere, I've seen everything, and now I want to settle down. Did you ever see such an air?—I haven't seen anything so smart as that walk of hers since I was in England! She didn't wear tight shoes and wobble,—she *walked.* She must be English!"

"Who?" demanded Ferdinand, with a slight smile.

"Oh, *that* girl!"

"You ought to be happy here, Wirt," Ferdinand said, when he had finished his sherry, and found a cigar to suit him, "you have made no great mistake in life."

"Yes, I have," said Wirt, holding the tea-ball in his little Japanese cup; "yes, I have,—I haven't married."

Ferdinand sighed again. "It is a mistake on the right side," he said. After that, he went off to dress for dinner, leaving Wirt to wonder what he meant.

Katharine laughed out loud after the carriage started. The young man showed so plainly that he wanted to know her name, and looked so queer.

This gust of amusement carried her in good spirits to her uncle's very door. Mr. Sherwood's house was a very beautiful one. He had escaped the Queen Anne epidemic and built a house of rough brownstone, which was both imposing and comfortable. A profuse growth of ivy took away its look of newness, and Mr. Sherwood had the good sense not to tinker with the grounds around it and spoil the picture. He left the grounds to an expert landscape gardener; and his reward was great. Katharine, nervous as she was, could not help admiring the gradual approach to the house, for Mr. Sherwood had not built on the roadside.

Who would meet her? What should she say,—oh, what should she say? She felt for her dear beads, but they were gone; she had given them to Mr. Percival. Before she had time to think again, the man opened the carriage-door,—and the awful moment had come!

But it was not so terrible, after all. Mr. Sherwood came down the steps to meet her.

"Uncle Marcus!" she said; there was something in her tone so like his dead mother's, that he took her in his arms and kissed her forehead, though he was prepared only to shake hands.

Katharine's eyes filled with tears. Farther back in the hall, under two arching palm-trees, was her

aunt. Mrs. Sherwood's attire was exceedingly correct and her pose impressive. She made two steps forward, curved her right arm on a level with her shoulder, and let her hand droop. Katharine went forward, and, embarrassed by this manœuvre, paused blushing.

"So glad to see you, dear,—ever so glad!" said Mrs. Sherwood, still curving her arm.

"Take your aunt's hand, dear," whispered her uncle, "she wants you to shake hands. That's the smart way of doing it now."

Katharine blundered badly; but fortunately her aunt took no notice of her awkwardness or her uncle's whisper.

"We dine at seven," Mrs. Sherwood said; "Markham will show you to your room."

Katharine, feeling guilty and abased, followed the prim maid upstairs.

"Well, she's here," said Mrs. Sherwood, "and it's a great responsibility. She's not as ugly as she seemed to be in her black gown; but she's terribly unformed. Her convent bearing is against her."

"Not at all," said Mr. Sherwood cheerfully, "you'll find it will help her. For myself, I did not see anything 'unformed' about her, except that she hadn't learned your cockney habit of shaking hands, as *Punch* says:

> "Her arm, in lifted curve displayed,
> Drops limply o'er the shoulder-blade,
> As needing some chirurgeon's aid:

"Her wrist is wrenched of Jones and Brown,
These ornaments of London town;
Three listless fingers dribble down—"

"That sort of thing is very vulgar. I hope you'll not laugh at decent manners before that girl," said Mrs. Sherwood. "I'm sure she'll disgrace us in some way."

In the meantime "that girl" had taken out her statuette of the Blessed Mother, and was praying and crying before it.

CHAPTER VI.

Artlessness and Heartlessness.

MRS. SHERWOOD, in entire ignorance of the interest her guest had created, was disposed to bewail her fate—in having her on her hands.

"Why is it, Marcus," she said, "that our relatives are never of any use to us either financially or socially? Some people have poor relations who have social advantages. There were those upstarts, the Worths, for instance. Positively nobody visited them until a second cousin of theirs, a French marquis—"

"Poor, but proud," interrupted her husband, dropping his newspaper—they were taking their morning drive to the train. "All that come here are."

"Don't interrupt me. I wish we had one in the family; nothing goes now like a title. Those Worths found out this marquis in '76; he came over for the Centennial Exposition."

"He was a waiter at the *Trois Frères* on the Exposition Grounds—I remember him well—"

"Never mind!" said Mrs. Sherwood, sharply. "'True hearts are more than coronets, and simple faith than Norman blood.'"

"Exactly," said her husband gravely, "though a woman of society like yourself is the last person I should expect to hear quoting *that*. And, if it be true, let us be grateful that this little girl has come into our house. If I mistake not, she has a true heart, if she has no social *prestige*."

Mrs. Sherwood took a smelling-bottle, encrusted with moon-stones, from her reticule. She used it as Talleyrand used his snuff-box, to gain time for thought, and probably to keep her temper.

"But these Worths made a great deal of their marquis, though they were really *nobody* themselves. Our relatives are absolute drags on us, and this 'little girl,' as you call her, is not at all likely to make a brilliant match. A girl to do that in Philadelphia must be exceedingly well-born or exceedingly rich."

Mr. Sherwood smiled.

"I suppose I shall shock you, my dear, but I must say that I do not care whether she marries brilliantly or not. Besides, what would be considered a brilliant marriage here might not really be a brilliant marriage."

"I would be happy," cried Mrs. Sherwood, devoutly, "if she should by some good luck marry Wirt Percival! That would give us everything we want."

"Hardly," said Mr. Sherwood, a little sadly, "for I want *peace*. Sometimes I can't help wondering

if there isn't something to be got out of life that will *last*."

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed his wife, looking at him anxiously. "Your liver is certainly out of order."

"Perhaps it is." He said no more; but the sight of Katharine had awakened an unusual train of thought. Mrs. Sherwood, who had not the slightest conception of this current in her husband's mind, continued to talk.

"The girl must make a marriage of reason, and we must try to keep her out of the way of any young person who might not be an eligible catch. One detrimental is enough, and if she should marry the wrong man, we'd have two on our hands."

"Oh, that reminds me," said Mr. Sherwood, suddenly wakening up from his unusually serious reverie, "Katharine's a Catholic; she may object to a marriage with anybody outside her church."

"She *may?*" exclaimed Mrs. Sherwood, plying the smelling-bottle again. "I guess she may *not!*' And Mrs. Sherwood frowned portentously. "That's the way with these convent-school girls—they have prejudices. A woman should be brought up not to be too particular, I think. If a girl nowadays marries a nice man in good society, with enough money to support her, she should not be too particular about religion. It's most unreasonable!"

Mr. Sherwood shook his head; he saw a cloud on the horizon and he wished that his wife were a

little more "unreasonable" and a little less devoted to "society."

Mrs. Sherwood said good-bye to her husband at the train. She did not meet Katharine until luncheon-time. She had prepared a series of remarks principally intended to make her guest understand that life would henceforth be very different from what it had been at the convent. Katharine was a little afraid of Mrs. Sherwood; she had an instinctive feeling that her aunt did not like her, and she had been accustomed to an atmosphere in which love was like ozone in the air of the sea. Katharine had a great wish to be loved; she felt that life must be a burden if she lived at Kenwood with people who disapproved of her. This desire to be thought well of would have been a great disadvantage to a girl less carefully educated than Katharine had been; but Mother Ursula had not permitted it to dominate her, and Katharine had been taught to guard against the weakness of character which such a desire often engenders. And yet it was so prominent in Katharine's temperament, that it often required a great struggle for her to say "No." Happily she had learned strength from Mother Ursula. She was inclined to propitiate Mrs. Sherwood.

The lady watched her closely without appearing to do so. She came to the conclusion that Katharine had an interesting face, but "somewhat insipid." Her dress would have to be remodeled, and she was

so very quiet. Mrs. Sherwood, looking at her, concluded that convent education was a failure.

"If she had been at a fashionable boarding-school," she thought, "she would have some manners; if at a woman's college, she could at least *talk*. What on earth shall I do with a creature like this on my hands?"

She drank her chocolate in bitterness of spirit. But she must make a beginning somehow; but why, oh why, had Marcus brought this affliction upon her?

"You will arrange your hours to give me a little time occasionally, will you not?" she said sweetly.

"Oh, certainly," said Katharine, "I shall always be at your service."

"Dear, dear!" sighed Mrs. Sherwood, "such sweetness will kill me if she keeps it up! These convents mistake that sort of amiability for education." And then aloud: "You are to be brought out soon, you know."

Katharine looked up, startled. "Brought out!" What new process was this?

"You know," said Mrs. Sherwood, with despair at her heart, "that I have no daughter to introduce to society, so I shall quite enjoy introducing you. And we must get some gowns and things. I suppose you will not need my helping you to choose them."

"Oh, why can't I stay in?" asked Katharine eagerly. "I'm sure I'll be quite happy with you and my uncle—when I get to know you better—"

Here she slipped, flushing a little. "That is—of course—I am very fond of you—"

"Don't trouble yourself to apologize," said Mrs. Sherwood; "it doesn't matter. I know what you're thinking about; of course you can't like people rapturously at first, and I hope you will not *pretend* to."

Mrs. Sherwood had understood that they were very sly in convents, and she intended this as a rebuke. "We have some very clever literary people at Kenwood; we have societies—of course you are literary."

"I don't know—exactly,—that is—"

Mrs. Sherwood's manner was really too much for Katharine. She knew that she was showing herself at her worst, and yet she could not help it.

"You read Browning, of course?"

"I have not read much of—"

"I thought not," interrupted Mrs. Sherwood; "but we'll try a little of his easy work every day after your uncle is gone. I feel, dear, that I will have to bring you up to the modern standard in some things. I'm afraid the Sisters have neglected you."

"Oh, not at all!" Katharine exclaimed eagerly. "I assure you, that if I lack many things it is not their fault."

"I suppose they thought Dickens too vulgar for young ladies, and Thackeray too cynical, and Shakespeare impossible," Mrs. Sherwood said, growing better humored as she became conscious of her own

superior culture. "*I* know the sort of atmosphere you lived in. Do you sing?"

"A little," began Katharine, really distressed; "that is—"

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Sherwood, quite pleased now to find that her feeling of superiority was likely to be permanent. "I must make you *thorough* in something. Of course you dance?"

"I have danced; but we never learned regularly. Indeed, aunt, you misunderstand the Sisters—"

"Oh, no, I don't," said Mrs. Sherwood—and then to the servant: "Give Miss O'Conor some of the orange-tart, Charlotte!"

"No, thank you!" said Katharine, almost choking; and then remembering that her aunt would probably expect her to take something, she asked for the strawberry ice-cream.

Mrs. Sherwood looked horrified.

"Nobody says ice-cream now, my dear. It's an Americanism. Ask for an 'ice,' not ice-cream."

Katharine swallowed the rebuke and the contents of the dainty gilded cup in silence. But at the moment she longed with all her heart to be back at school. This last trifling correction seemed to affect her more than all the other things her aunt had said. She looked out of the window and sighed. Mrs. Sherwood took up the paper, and dipped into a paragraph here and there.

"Dear me!" she murmured, "how people *do* climb up! To think of the Mackenzies writing their

name with a hyphen—Clifton-Mackenzie. Why her name wasn't Clifton at all; it was Hoggs—they kept a shop on South Street when we—" Here she prudently stopped without revealing where Mr. Sherwood had kept a shop at the same time. "They've actually had an afternoon tea, with lots of smart people at it." Katharine went on with her cream, trying to keep the tears back. She *would* not cry; why should she cry. Her aunt did not mean to be unkind. Oh, how stupid she had been, and how much ashamed of her the Sisters would be. She must try to think of something by which to redeem herself. But she could not; and a tear actually slid down her cheek. "Did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Sherwood. "*Did* you ever see how some people manage to climb? The Worths have really got an earl's daughter stopping with them. An earl's daughter is called 'the Lady,' isn't she?"

"I don't know," said Katharine, with a dreadful sense of guiltiness.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Sherwood, raising her eyebrows. "They've got an aristocratic person from Dublin. Dear me! I thought Dublin was all bogs and slums. She's the Lady Alicia—by the way," continued Mrs. Sherwood, a faint hope stealing into her heart, "your father was an Irishman, wasn't he?"

"Yes," said Katharine, "he came from Dublin."

"Do you know anybody there?" asked Mrs. Sherwood, her eyes sparkling. If there were really

ladies of title in Dublin—a thing she had never understood before—why might not Katharine perhaps help her to hook one for social purposes. Her hopes sank as Katharine answered:

"I know two people who write to me—Father Corwin, the Jesuit, and Biddy Singen, my cousin."

"Oh, how vulgar!" said Mrs. Sherwood. "Singen!—what a name!—and 'Biddy!' I hope this friend of yours is not a servant. I hope you won't talk too much about 'Biddy Singen;' she must be quite too awfully low!"

Katharine kept her tears back; her cheeks flushed.

"I must tell you, aunt, that in her last letter Biddy said she might come here to Philadelphia on a visit; and I love and respect her so that I hate to hear the slightest thing said sneeringly about her; but then you judge her by her name, which sounds odd to you. I hope I may see her when she comes here."

"*Here!*" repeated Mrs. Sherwood, aghast. "You may see her in the kitchen. Understand me, Katharine, you must give up all your low relations. It's hard enough for us to keep our place in society without handicapping ourselves with vulgar people of the lowest kind. 'Biddy Singen; indade!'" said Mrs. Sherwood, with one of those bad imitations of a presumed Irish brogue which make the judicious grieve and the injudicious indignant.

"If you and Uncle Marcus will not permit me to see my cousin—and I love her dearly, though I have never seen her—I would rather not stay here."

"High tragedy, my dear!" said Mrs. Sherwood, raising her eyeglass; "a reminiscence of convent theatricals! When your cousin comes over, as I presume she will in the steerage, you may see her—in the kitchen."

Katharine was silent. This seemed very brutal to her; she murmured a prayer that she might have strength to endure it. What a life was before her—how wretched, how artificial! This was only the first of her days at Kenwood, and she failed in every possible way; her dear Sisters had been insulted and her cousin reviled.

"If you could see Biddy's letters you would not call her vulgar, aunt," she said, making a last effort.

Mrs. Sherwood smiled.

"So Biddy can make pot-hooks, can she?" said her aunt pleasantly.

"If you could see her photograph—"

"No more of Biddy," said Mrs. Sherwood peremptorily. "I shall want you to accompany me into town at three o'clock. You must have some decent clothes before Thursday week, for there's a *musicale* and a flower-show, to which we really must go; you can go to a place like that before you're 'out,' you know."

Katharine did not know what her aunt meant, nor did she care. She went upstairs and had a good cry. Then she apostrophized Mother Ursula, as if she were a saint, forgetting how often she had grumbled against her decisions in the old days.

CHAPTER VII.

A New Social Standard.

IT takes very little to depress the spirits of young people, and much less to send them up to the highest point of the thermometer. Katharine, knowing that Mrs. Sherwood looked on her as an ignoramus, suffered for a while the acutest misery. How could she ever gain the respect of that uncompromisingly critical woman? she asked herself. And the worst of it was, that she was not the only subject of scorn; the sisters shared in it. Could anybody in the whole world be more unhappy? She felt as if her heart was a lump of lead. Oh, for the convent—the dear, dear convent—but that refuge was closed to her—the dear nuns could not help her; she was cast adrift. She had been well taught to find refuge in prayer. The beads, touching her finger tips, brought consolation to her, and she meditated on mystery after mystery in the silence of the little room which Mrs. Sherwood said was to be her "sanctum."

At three o'clock Katharine had a glimpse of the city. She forgot her trials in the delight of this. The moving panorama of Chestnut Street charmed

her. She had no temptation to compare it with Broadway, or with State Street. It did not strike her as more narrow than those two famous thoroughfares. Her unrestrained pleasure in the beautiful street was not lost on Mrs. Sherwood, who was very proud of her native city. She walked slowly down the fashionable side of the street, and explained many things to Katharine, which that young lady did not understand. She did not care whether Mrs. Worth's gowns came from Paris, or whether Mrs. So-and-so's carriage was hired.

Chestnut Street, in good weather, just before noon, or a little after noon, offers a beautiful spectacle. Its very narrowness gives an effect of concentration. In nearly every square was a flower vender or two, and Katharine could not express an exclamation of pleasure as the window of a famous florist, blazing with La France and Jacqueminot roses, met her view.

"Oh, really, you must not show so much feeling; it's not good form," said Mrs. Sherwood, half alarmed, half amused. "Are you fond of flowers?"

"*Am* I!" cried Katharine, her eyes sparkling.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't have some, then," answered Mrs. Sherwood, and they entered the shop.

Katharine was entirely happy for a moment; the flowers touched her sympathies as a fine poem, or a song, moves others. But Mrs. Sherwood brought her to her senses:—

"People will think you are from the country, if you stare that way : do cultivate repose."

Katharine blushed, and looked confused. The shopman filled her hands with La France roses, and Mrs. Sherwood carefully chose a bunch of carnations, as she understood that they were the fashionable flowers during the London season.

Again they walked along the street. Where did all the people come from? Katharine wondered. Were they all happy? And how many were Catholics? Some of them looked so good that she hoped they were Catholics.

"How pretty the young girls are! And how well dressed!" she exclaimed.

"You must expect that in Philadelphia," Mrs. Sherwood said; "our people—even those not in society—have the best taste in the country. New York is *awful*, and Baltimore—" Mrs. Sherwood could not express her contempt for the provincialism of Baltimore; she only smiled as one who looks down from a great height on the pigmies beneath.

Mrs. Sherwood sighed as she looked at Katharine's face, made positively beautiful by interest and sympathy, and thought how delighted she might have been, if Katharine were only "somebody," instead of an unknown young girl out of a convent school.

Katharine's trials began when they reached the dressmaker's. Two wretched hours were passed in talking and trying on various garments.

"You are very kind," she said to Mrs. Sherwood, "and I appreciate it. Of course I like fine clothes, but don't you think we might buy them ready made?"

A shiver ran through Mrs. Sherwood. She looked around cautiously, to see that nobody was looking, or listening:

"Never say such a thing again," she whispered, "*never!*"

Katharine was surprised. Why shouldn't she wear a readymade gown? She began to think that the rules of the world were more numerous and harder to bear than the rules of the convent.

The weary work was almost over when Katharine caused Mrs. Sherwood more anxiety. There was a young girl engaged in holding various wraps for ladies—a very gentle and patient young girl—who seemed ill and tired, for her delicate color changed easily, and once or twice she looked longingly towards a chair. She had spent the last hour in trying mantles on the shoulders of a stout old lady, who declined to be pleased. When Katharine had been measured, and twisted and turned by the dressmaker in waiting, it came Mrs. Sherwood's turn, and then Katharine had nothing to do except watch the young girl. This young girl permitted all kinds of wraps to be thrown on her shoulders; she walked up and down the floor and posed before various mirrors, and assumed various attitudes; but still the old lady was not pleased, and the young one seemed about to drop with exhaustion. Mrs. Sherwood—unluckily for

her, as she afterwards said—had gone to the other end of the room.

Katharine watched the changes of color in the delicate face, as the girl put a new wrap, glittering with jet, on her shoulders.

"I do not like the effect," said the old lady, sharply; "either you are too listless to show things properly, or there's nothing decent in the store."

Tears came to the eyes of the young girl. Katharine could stand this no longer. She arose from her chair and gently forced the young girl into it.

"I'll wait on this lady, if you don't mind; you rest a while."

The wrap was thrown over Katharine's shoulders, and she posed before the old lady, who was too much interested in herself to bother much about other people. The arrangement of jet looked very well on Katharine's straight figure, and well set shoulders. When the scene dawned on Mrs. Sherwood, the old lady was looking at Katharine with an air of great satisfaction, and the overtasked girl, too tired to speak, was resting in the chair, with her eyes half closed.

Mrs. Sherwood paused, appalled. She could not utter a word until she heard the old lady say—

"I am sure that will suit me—yes, I'll take it; it's very stylish."

Mrs. Sherwood was about to shake the young woman in the chair very roughly, but Katharine interfered.

"Let her alone, please—I do just as well."

"Much better," said the old lady, turning away. And then, as the proprietress came up, she added: "You ought to get somebody like this young lady to wait on your customers; I have bought this wrap because she taught me how well it could look."

The proprietress looked angrily at the young girl in the chair, who seemed about to faint.

"She is ill," said Katharine, hastily, "now please do not scold her. She was obliged to let me help her—I insisted on it."

"Jenny has been sick lately," said the proprietress, relenting; "I fancy I shall have to give her some rest."

The young girl opened her eyes and looked at Katharine gratefully.

Mrs. Sherwood, with a cloud on her brow, said:—

"Come!"

When they had reached the street, she said, in a congealed voice, in which the sharpest icicles were apparent:

"Are you in the habit of doing that sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing?" asked Katharine, nervously.

"Don't put on that air of innocence!" whispered Mrs. Sherwood through her teeth. "You know very well that you have been guilty of the greatest impropriety."

"No, I don't," said Katharine, "I only helped a poor girl in distress. I am sure the Blessed Virgin would have done the same thing, if—"

Mrs. Sherwood groaned—what could be done with a girl who said such things. The idea of applying such a standard to modern society. She had always been against convent education, and here was a corroboration of her prejudices.

"I presume you consider that sufficient justification of your absurd conduct?"

"I certainly do!" Katharine replied, with spirit. "If I had known it would be disagreeable to you, I would have hesitated, perhaps, and called the attention of the proprietress to the illness of the young girl."

"You should have minded your own business,—but we will not discuss this matter in the street. Besides, we must find a milliner,—but don't show your low tastes again by changing places with the shop girls."

At that moment Katharine would have changed places with anybody. A half hour was passed at the milliner's. When they were leaving, Katharine protested against the expense her aunt had incurred.

"I don't need so many things, aunt," she said. "I am not rich enough to have so many things to wear."

"I am the best judge of *that*," said her aunt coldly. "My husband desires that you should make a suitable appearance in society. That ought to be enough for you."

"It is, of course," said Katharine, "but why must I have so many dresses of light colors? One would be enough, and there are charities—"

"One would *not* be enough, and no doubt your uncle will allow you something for charity. People have something to do, besides thinking of charities all the time. We are not so idle as nuns in a convent."

"Idle!" said Katharine. "Idle!"

A cab drew up, at a signal from Mrs. Sherwood, and they were driven rapidly towards the railroad station.

"Idle!" repeated Katharine to herself, with a little laugh,—"if Mother Ursula could only hear that!"

Mrs. Sherwood was silent all the way home. She was busily arranging a plan of campaign in her mind. Since it would be impossible to improve her social position with Katharine's aid, she was determined to marry her as soon as possible. The idea of sending out girls into the world with such Quixotic ideas of life,—the idea! What might she not do! How could any modern man take a fancy to a girl brought up with opinions of the Middle Ages. It was hard enough to keep well in her own social set; but what might not become of her, if Katharine should continue to imitate Peter the Hermit or some other person admired in convents?

Yes,—she must be married; but how to manage it?

The carriage was waiting at the station. Once safely in it, Mrs. Sherwood resolved to sound Katharine on the subject of marriage.

"I presume all girls think of settling down some time," she said, "and after you have had

some experience in society you will want a home of your own."

"I have not thought much about it," said Katharine.

"I mean of course that you will marry."

"Oh, must I!" cried Katharine, in genuine alarm.

"The girl's a fool," murmured Mrs. Sherwood. "Certainly,—it's expected of every girl to marry well. You owe it to your uncle and to me."

"But suppose I don't like anybody well enough—"

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Sherwood, "if a man's rich and good-tempered, every good woman ought to like him."

"But suppose he shouldn't be a Catholic—" began Katharine.

"Religion has nothing to do with marriage, but reason has everything.—Like him! indeed!—I thought you are taught in convents to marry the person picked out for you by judicious friends."

"We are supposed to exercise our will even in convents," replied Katharine, with a flash of spirit.

Mrs. Sherwood said no more; she was disgusted. She dressed quickly for dinner, and took the opportunity of telling her husband of her tribulations before Katharine entered.

"Just like Katie!" he exclaimed, as his wife finished the tale of Katharine's conduct at the dressmaker's. "It's a relief to have such an unspoiled creature in the house; I feel as if Katie were alive again!"

His wife folded her hands in despair. What can one do with a man who talks that way? she asked herself.

When Katharine entered, looking subdued and a little paler than usual, Marcus Sherwood kissed her on the forehead.

"Why, my dear, you are exactly like your mother to-night."

As they went in to dinner, Mrs. Sherwood said to herself,—

"Nevertheless, she shall make a marriage of reason!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Biddy Singen.

KATHARINE'S life at this time was full of trouble. She often wondered whether St. Teresa's maxim, "Let nothing disturb you," was intended for people in the world. Her great difficulty was that she was never sure whether she was doing right or wrong. What seemed right to her was sure to be wrong in Mrs. Sherwood's eyes. And then she grew weary of the constant "nagging" about her manner of speech. Mrs. Sherwood, like many other Americans who have had a glimpse of life in England, modelled herself and her belongings on what she fondly imagined was the best English plan; she could tolerate social fibs by the dozen, but she looked on an "Americanism" on the tongue of others with horror. If it had not been for the refuges from outward tribulations with which the convent had supplied her, she would have been utterly disheartened by the sense that she was not only ignorant, but ill-bred—a sense which Mrs. Sherwood did all in her power to cultivate. But she had her devotions, and the dear old Rosary was the truest friend in need.

Katharine admired the beautiful things around her; she could see that it was delightful to be rich, but she felt, too, that it was more delightful to be free. Evening after evening, as she sat in the softly-lighted and flower-scented drawing-room, surrounded by a hundred luxurious marks of good taste and wealth, she longed earnestly for the simplicity of the convent. There, in spite of rules, she was free to be herself—to show the best that was in her. Her uncle was exceedingly kind, but Mrs. Sherwood protested that she would not have Katharine petted and over-indulged, and she had little time to spend with him, because her aunt kept her busy with dressmakers, milliners, and a master of deportment, who came to teach her the method of Delsarte just before dinner when her uncle was at leisure. Mrs. Sherwood resolved that her husband should not interfere with her plans, and, in her heart, she was just a little jealous of the love her husband had for his dead sister. Mr. Sherwood, too, was inclined, when left to himself, to fall back from the high social ideals his wife had laboriously built up for him; he had absolutely no social perspective; he would shake hands with his own servant, and he had been known to take off his hat to the cook one day when he met her in the street. Mrs. Sherwood recalled this episode with a shudder. What might not happen if he discovered that Katharine was capable of taking the place of a shop-girl and of acting as if people in a lower station of life were to be considered in the

light of equals? Mrs. Sherwood, in that event, might be compelled to face a combination which might destroy the symmetry of her social arrangements. She had little hope of ever entering that sublime circle where the Percivals and others dwelt, happy, like Buddha on his golden lotos, and she had less hope since Katharine had come to be a burden on her hands. And yet there was a chance of the girl making a marriage of reason, and for this Mrs. Sherwood felt it her duty to struggle. In fact, she was as much a martyr to her social duties as many a poor woman is to those of her household. Her life was as laborious as that of many a washerwoman. The luncheon and the afternoon tea and the calls she made were as sacred to her as the Decalogue, and she worked like a slave in order to pay off the only social debts she recognized. When Katharine began to understand this, she was terrified. It seemed such a terrible waste of time; and she recalled an old legend she had heard of the rich man invited to a great king's feast, who, opening his arms which should have been filled with a splendid burden of gifts, displayed only a few withered leaves. Her aunt's anxiety to be "in the swim" reminded her of the rich man of the legend. To what end was all this thought, this weariness, this constant succession of gayety that had become no longer gayety because it was a matter of routine? It made nobody happier —it meant envy and heartburning and heartless calculation. And life must mean all this to Katharine,

if she did not strive with all her might to resist the influence her aunt was bringing to bear on her. The ease of the material part of life had its fascination for her; but so artificial was the whole system by which her aunt lived and breathed, that Katharine, with her training, had no real difficulty in resistance. But, to make things worse in her estimation, Mother Ursula counselled submission in all those small social details in which no revolt of conscience was involved.

Mrs. Sherwood believed that her lot was most unhappy. If Katharine was not positively ugly, she was without the distinction that comes from culture; she had no pre-eminent accomplishments; she spoke seldom, except when Mr. Sherwood made some of his inane jokes, borrowed, his wife insisted, from the humorous column of his favorite afternoon paper. Then her face brightened, and Mr. Sherwood showed almost childish pleasure in her appreciation. If the girl had only been striking in some way, she might, although she was a nobody in Philadelphia, have become the rage and helped her aunt to force her way into society. As it was, the best must be made of what Mrs. Sherwood had come to consider the worst. Mrs. Sherwood was compelled to admit that Katharine's voice was lovely and that she spoke French well; but everybody in decent society spoke French; it had ceased to be a distinction.

The epoch for which Mrs. Sherwood had prepared Katharine came at last. The day was like many other days in Mrs. Sherwood's calendar, but it held

the festival which was to give occasion for all Philadelphians who could induce the patronesses of a certain exclusive charity to let them pay ten dollars for a card to drink tea, eat ices, listen to an orchestra, and look at a collection of flowers. But the initiated well understood that the ten dollars were not paid for charity or for the tea or the music or the flowers, but they were for the pleasure of being in the company of a few hundred of those exalted creatures that form society.

Mr. Sherwood was obliged to leave his office two hours earlier than usual and be ready to meet his wife and Katharine in the station at Philadelphia. Mrs. Sherwood's dressmaker had undoubtedly done her best for Katharine, and the arrangement of white cloth and silver braid, with a hat loaded with peach blossoms, was probably the perfection of art, but at first Katharine did not appreciate it. Looking into her glass, she was startled, however, by the difference it made in her appearance. She blushed with pleasure, as she saw the reflection of the graceful lines and the soft combination of color in the mirror. Even the severe Mrs. Sherwood was pleased, and this gave Katharine a feeling of pleasure she had not had for many a day. When her uncle saw her at the station, his face lit up with genuine delight.

"You are more and more like Katie," he said, "I never thought you could be so pretty. Your mother was a beautiful woman, my dear."

Once in the carriage, warm in a white feather wrap, Katharine began to enjoy herself. After all, the world was not such a bad place—she began to gather up the remnants of confidence in herself, so rudely scattered by her aunt. She could not be so stupid as her aunt imagined; for Mother Ursula was as fine a gentlewoman as anybody in Mrs. Sherwood's set—and Mother Ursula had spared no pains with her. Yes, she would have confidence; for the sake of Our Lady of the Rosary, the dear old school, she would hold her own.

Long strings of carriages stood in front of the large building on Broad Street, in which the supreme function was to take place. Mrs. Sherwood sighed, as their carriage drew up to the curb, for there was Mrs. Percival just ahead of her, surrounded by a group of unapproachables. Oh! if Katharine were only somebody,—somebody who would make these people stare and ask for introductions. If she was even like that bold-looking creature with the Wiltonstans, who was really a nobody from Iowa, but who had written the most shocking book of the season. Mr. Sherwood might not like to appear in society with the author of "Passionate Wailings,"—but Mrs. Sherwood said to herself that she could tolerate anything that would make her a personage. In spite of all her luxuries, Mrs. Sherwood, attired like Solomon, was most unhappy. It seems strange to the young that luxury and the command of money do not make happiness. It would seem almost impossible that any sane person

should look on the world in such an artificial light and suffer because certain people did not see fit to bow to her. But, nevertheless, the feeling of being outside the sacred circle made poor Mrs. Sherwood really unhappy. Her husband was pleased with Katharine's evident enjoyment. The music, the air of brightness, above all, the flowers placed in great masses around the room delighted her. She had never seen such roses, and rhododendrons, and pansies. The roses—especially magnificent specimens of La France, whose soft pink was exquisite—were marvels to her.

The hall had begun to be crowded. Mrs. Sherwood spoke to many people, but unhappily they were not of the set in which she longed to mingle. She kept her eyes aloof from many more—generally creatures who had helped her at charity fairs or something of the kind—and who had no other claim to recognition. A zither concert was in progress as they reached the part of the room reserved for the roses. And Katharine could not tell which pleased her more —those lovely La France buds or the music, which was new to her. If Mother Ursula could only have some of those exquisite pink roses for the altar! The two players on the zither had just finished an old-fashioned Tyrolean air and began the Schweitzer's "Heimweh," and as the sympathetic notes were drawn out under skilful fingers, Katharine's eyes filled with tears. Mrs. Sherwood looked at her with ill-concealed irritation. Would that girl never know

that it was "bad form" to show one's feelings in public? The Worths passed with bows and an inquiring look at Katharine. Mrs. Sherwood did not present Katharine to them—she was ashamed of her, and then O'Conor was such a vulgar name.

A few minutes afterwards Mrs. Sherwood was shocked by the sight of Katharine pursuing the Worths, mother and daughter, across the floor.

"Stop," she cried, "stop—what on earth does that idiot mean, Marcus?" she said, turning to her husband. Katharine returned hastily, all blushes, to the care of her indignant chaperon.

"I thought the girl with those people was Biddy," she said, apologetically. Mr. Sherwood could not help smiling at his wife's evident discomfiture.

"She thought the girl with those people was Biddy," repeated Mrs. Sherwood, in bitter accents. "Oh! let us go home—she'll certainly disgrace us!"

"But I really thought it was Biddy—Biddy Singen, you know," said Katharine, feebly.

"And so it was—and so it is," said a clear, rich voice at her elbow. "I am so glad you are as much like your last photograph as I am like mine. Yes, I'm Biddy, and you're Kitty O'Conor!"

Mrs. Sherwood turned. Here was a tall, fresh-colored girl, in a dark gown, kissing Katharine. Not far off were the Worths, Mr. and Mrs. Percival, with their nephew, and Ferdinand Carey.

"Why, there's our girl," said Wirt.

"*Your girl*," echoed Mr. Percival; "she's *our girl*—and how sweet she looks!"

"Don't speak to her—she's with that horrid Mrs. Sherwood," whispered his wife.

"I will; I'm sure I may speak to anybody that the ineffable Lady Alicia St. John favors with so many kisses. Why, even you are dying to know the Lady Alicia."

Mr. Percival pressed forward, and shook hands warmly with Katharine, and his wife had to follow his example. She was hoping that she might avoid an introduction to the Sherwoods, when Katharine said:

"No doubt you know my aunt and uncle, Mrs. Percival—aunt, this is Biddy Singen!"

"The Lady Alicia Bridget St. John," said Mrs. Worth, primly.

"No, only Biddy to Katharine O'Conor," said the Lady Alicia. "I had no idea you Americans were so fond of titles." Wirt and Ferdinand Percival pressed forward, to be presented to "that girl;" and at once Mrs. Sherwood, by a sudden turn of the wheel, found her dreams realized. She was on view —on public view—as the centre of the "best people" in the best set in Philadelphia; but Katharine had eyes only for Biddy!

CHAPTER IX.

The Triumph of Katharine.

MRS. SHERWOOD was for ten minutes almost a happy woman. In an instant—by this sudden turn of fortune's wheel, as it were—the things she had most hoped for had come to pass. But, like all people who put their whole trust in such unreal things as wealth and fashion, she began to find the apples she had longed for dust and ashes. It was not to her that the attentions of the Percivals and their train were directed; it was to her husband's niece, the simple and inexperienced convent girl. What did it mean? Was the world going mad? With Mr. Percival, the husband of the most exclusive woman in town, beaming at Katharine and acting as if he had found a long-lost daughter—with Wirt Percival and Ferdinand Carey hanging on her words, and the Lady Alicia St. John fluttering about her like a delighted butterfly, it did, indeed, seem to Mrs. Sherwood that Katharine was getting much more than she deserved. She could not understand why so much attention should be shown to a mere, unformed young woman out of a convent, and she felt a certain bitterness over it which was akin to

envy. She remembered, too, the scorn she had expressed at the name of "Biddy Singen," and was furious at the thought of it. Why had Katharine permitted her to remain in such error? She could not understand Katharine's simplicity; she set her silence on that occasion down to a deliberate intention to be impertinent. There was no doubt about the completeness of Katharine's social success, however. Fashionable people go in droves, and the group around her was soon surrounded by other groups, all desirous of knowing a person to whom all the elect were paying so much attention.

Now, if Mother Ursula were present, would have been the time when she would have been most solicitous for her pupil. She believed that Katharine's devotion would be augmented by adversity; but that the greatest danger to her would arise from prosperity or that luxury which produces artificial views of life and destroys all natural feeling and all real fervor.

To tell the truth, Katharine was pleased with the evident intention of everybody to be kind to her. She was not by any means overwhelmed by it, because she had not acquired Mrs. Sherwood's point of view, or Mrs. Percival's estimate of the value of social position. Lady Alicia St. John was simply her relative, "Biddy Singen," whom she had at last met in the flesh. The sisters had kept her simple and honest, and free from all snobbishness. She liked Mr. and Mrs. Percival, who had been kind to her during her

lonely journey on the train, and she was glad to show it. She was not specially interested in the young men; but as they appeared to be friends both of the Percivals and of her own "Biddy," she was pleased to see them.

Mrs. Percival was both delighted and displeased. Katharine had taken a certain place in her imagination ever since the scene of the baptism in the train. Besides, her conscience had troubled her somewhat. In spite of her callousness and the unreal state of feeling which an artificial point of view had induced, she desired, above all things, that her husband should become a Catholic. She loved him very truly, notwithstanding a habit of quarrelling with him over all sorts of trifles. She knew that he was restless and unhappy about religious matters; she knew, too, that her domestic life would be more serene, if he and she were united in religion, and she had an uneasy feeling that her worldliness had something to do with keeping him out of the Church; but it was only an uneasy feeling, not a conviction. She had deliberately placed beyond his reach the only Catholic of their acquaintance to whom he had shown a liking. She had been much struck by a phrase in one of the Archbishop's sermons preached at the Cathedral on the Sunday after she had met Katharine. He had said very strongly and gracefully—in a manner that gave the words a deeper meaning than they could possibly have in print—that example was more forcible than precept, that a life taught better

than mere words, and Mrs. Percival impressed as she had been by Katharine's faith, purity and sincerity, had asked herself whether she had done right to deprive her husband of the example of such qualities, springing directly, as they did in Katharine's case, from the influence of the Church. She hated to gratify that "climbing Mrs. Sherwood" by extending her hands to her so that she could mount the inmost inclosure of fashion, but she resolved to do it, as she could not help, with as good a grace as possible.

She determined, however, that Wirt should not take a fancy to Katharine. He must marry the Lady Alice,—he was already so English, that an English-Irish wife would be quite appropriate; therefore she was a little taken aback when she heard a bit of talk between Katharine and the young woman from Dublin.

"Oh, Biddy," she heard Katharine say, "how lovely it is to meet you—and to think of our knowing each other by our photographs—wasn't it wonderful! You must stay here always! You'll have to marry an American and live near us, won't she, Uncle Marcus?"

Uncle Marcus, dumb in the presence of the aristocracy, smiled.

"Oh! no," said Biddy, in a rather high-pitched voice, but in the charming Dublin accent, "we never marry American men on the other side; we do not like them, though some of our men marry American

girls—when they are rich. One likes American men as friends, don't you know, but marriage is a different thing."

The frankness of this announcement brought a flush to Wirt Percival's face, for he was not altogether averse to his aunt's plans. He had thought of late how well it would sound to be announced in Philadelphia at smart functions as—

"Mr. Wirt Percival and the Lady Alicia Percival."

"Why, the girl's a beggar," muttered Mr. Percival to Mr. Sherwood, "fancy—"

Biddy smiled, with perfect self-possession and made a courtesy in the old fashion to the murmurer.

"Not quite Monseigneur,—not quite. When I am," she added, with a mischievous laugh, "I may be reduced to take an American husband!"

Mrs. Worth, a pale woman, with bleached hair and a single eyeglass, pulled her guest by the sleeve.

"Oh, my dear Lady Alice," she said, "you really mustn't joke in that fashion."

"Sure I'm not joking," said Biddy, "a girl may express her opinion in a free country, I hope."

She put her arm in Katharine's and walked towards a great stand of lilies. The music had just ceased to play the Polonaise in Mignon; the Worths, the Percivals, and the Sherwoods—celestial combination in Mrs. Sherwood's mind!—gathered about the orchids. Mr. Percival scowled in the direction of the young woman, and Wirt looked disgusted.

"Did you ever hear such an insolent speech? Why, the girl's a beggar," said the elder man. "Every acre of the estate of her father, Lord Bolingbroke, was mortgaged before he died, and now that the Land League runs everything in Ireland, I don't believe she has a hundred pounds a year. I like her impertinence!"

"She is honest, at least," said Wirt. "We have to stand a little impertinence from people who feel their misfortune—"

"And whom you toady to," said Mr. Percival. "Positively, it makes me sick. What's a title to you? If you want to marry a nice girl, why not propose to that Miss O'Conor. And if you must have a title, you can buy one, and be as great a grandee as that American-Italian Marquis Riddle-Pope, who lives not far from you. Give me Duluth and the West; after all, they're really more American out there."

"Miss O'Connor's nice, uncle. I admit all that—she walks like an English girl; but she wouldn't marry me—she is a Catholic."

Mr. Percival was silent.

"Ah, well," he said, with a sigh, "perhaps she is right—I don't think my wife has been altogether happy—but that's neither here nor there. I've taken a great fancy to her. You're rich; she'll not be poor as Marcus Sherwood's niece. My dear boy, she's the rage,—the new 'fad,'—the beauty of the season;—everybody's looking at her and that cheeky

Irish girl. You couldn't do better. It will be a perfect marriage of reason. Besides, neither you nor Ferdinand believe in anything, and you could easily adapt yourself to anybody else's convictions. Oh! I am tired of all this," the elder man said, bitterly, "here are you, who stand as a son to me, frittering away your life in a silly attempt to be what you are not. What do the French call it—*fin de siècle*,—without convictions,—without *heart?*"

Wirt said nothing. He contrasted the Lady Alice with Katharine, as they stood amid the lilies, and thought that perhaps, after all, it would be pleasanter to marry a lovely girl like Katharine, who couldn't say sharp things, than an aristocratic one like her relative, who could and would.

Biddy looked into Katharine's face.

"How much sweeter you are than your picture. Oh, Kitty," she said, "how happy you must be—though I can't understand how anybody can really be happy in America."

"Happy?" said Katharine. "I don't think I am. I was *almost* happy in the convent; but here," she paused, doubtfully, and then fearing that her friend might think she was ungrateful for the meeting, she added, "I'm sure I ought to be happy to-day, because I have met you."

"I am sure I shall like you, Kitty, and I want you to like me. I shall be here in Philadelphia for a month or so with the Worths,—one of the daughters married a French cousin of mine, and

when they came to Dublin they asked me over here. I can't say I like it, you know, but when a girl's poor, she must do the best she can."

Katharine opened her eyes at the sigh with which this was uttered. She did not know what to say. She touched the stem of an exquisite calla lily and watched it vibrate.

"Now, you're rich—I can see that," Lady Alicia said, looking at her dress; "that gown must have come from Kate Reilly, or Worth, or somebody. It's quite perfect."

"I don't know much about dress," Katharine said; "in fact, the world isn't as interesting as I thought it would be. Nobody is serious—nobody thinks of the next world: everybody is so intensely occupied with trifling things,—dinner-parties, and engagements, and marriages."

The Irish girl laughed.

"Lady Alicia!" began Katharine, somewhat offended.

"Oh, call me 'Biddy,' as you always did in your letters,—I'm tired of being Lady Aliciaed! How you Americans love to roll a title in your mouths! I can't help laughing when I hear you talk of marriage as a trifling thing. Why, it's the object of my life! And the worst of it is, I've got to marry here, because I can't marry on the other side. If a girl doesn't marry, what is she to do?"

Katharine looked at her friend in amazement.

"She may do a great deal of good—"

"And be an old maid," said Biddy, scornfully.

"She may go into a convent—"

"That's out of the question, if she has no vocation. Oh! really, Kitty, I must marry. One can't marry in Ireland, unless one has money. Now I have scarcely any, though I suppose some tradesman would take me for the sake of the title,—but that's not to be thought of. Now I rather like your men; they are not so well educated as ours, and some of them are rather queer, but I'm told they're all very rich."

Biddy raised her large blue eyes to Katharine's with an expression of shrewdness in them which for a moment repelled the girl from the convent.

"Mother Ursula sometimes talked to us about marriage, but not in that way. She said that it was a vocation,—a very sacred thing—"

"Oh! I've heard all that," said Biddy, impatiently; "but I'm a poor girl, and as no Irishman of my class can afford to marry me without money, I've got to catch somebody here."

"But you'll have to marry a Catholic."

"I can't," said Biddy, smiling and showing a row of brilliant teeth in a way that made Katharine forget the shrewd glance of the moment before. "I can't marry one, unless he appears. All the rich men I've met don't seem to have any religion, and I suppose I'll have to make the best of it. They give dispensations in this country for mixed marriages, don't they?"

"But the Church is against them. Oh! Biddy —oh, Lady Alicia, don't!"

"You remind me of *Punch's* advice to people about to marry—*Punch* said 'Don't.' No, Katharine, I must do the best I can; it's only a rich girl that can afford to marry as she pleases nowadays,—or a very poor one without any social position."

Katharine was shocked; she did not speak. In vain the music rose and fell, in vain men and women passed her and her friend, envying the position of one girl and the beauty of the other. Her hand stole into the pocket of the silver-trimmed jacket she wore and touched her dear beads. After all, in doubt there is no consolation like a Hail Mary.

Wirt Percival's voice sounded behind them.

"Oh! Mr. Percival," Lady Alicia said, "if you're going to drive me out on your brake to-morrow, you must include Miss O'Conor and Mrs. Sherwood—that's your aunt's name, isn't it, Kitty?"

"Certainly," said Wirt Percival, with a pleased smile. He brought tea to both the young women; and, when Biddy had gone for a walk with Ferdinand Carey, he devoted himself to Katharine.

"Good!" whispered Mr. Percival in his ear, as he passed, just as Katharine had joined her aunt.

"She *is* lovely!" returned Wirt, in a whisper; "and I think she is interested in me. She asked me if I believed in Christianity?"

And Katharine had asked the question out of zeal for her friend's future!

"And what did you say?"

"I said that I had not considered the matter. Do you know, uncle, I think I'll propose, if the Lady Alicia rejects me!"

After dinner that night, Mr. Percival repeated this dialogue to his wife.

"Poor girl!" Mrs. Percival said, "I suppose those odious Sherwoods will force her into a mixed marriage for the sake of the advantage of marrying into our set. But I don't approve of mixed marriages myself, though we've always got on well."

"But you've never been altogether happy," said Mr. Percival, "and I know it."

Mrs. Percival did not answer; and her husband took up his newspaper, echoing her sigh.

CHAPTER X.

Mrs. Sherwood's First Battle.

THE number of invitations that followed Katharine's success at the flower show somewhat smoothed Mrs. Sherwood's irritation at the supremacy which the girl had suddenly assumed, in spite of herself. There could be no doubt of it—the Sherwoods were at last "in the swim of society." There was every hope that they would receive an invitation to that most sublime of all functions in social Philadelphia—the Assembly.

Mr. Sherwood was proud of Katharine's success, but at the same time anxious and puzzled about it. He was pleased because it reversed the positions of his wife and Katharine and made the former respect the latter as a social dependent. This pleased him because he had a secret fear that Mrs. Sherwood would force Katharine into an unhappy marriage or drive her to unhappiness by artificial ways of thought and action.

Katharine tried to be content, but she was not. The round of dinners and luncheons and dances in prospect were not so interesting to contemplate as she had imagined—for there seemed to be no end to

them. Like all young girls Katharine loved gayety and amusement; she liked dance music and flowers and perfumes. The Lanciers and the Quadrilles of the school days, which made the convent recreation-room ring, were dear to her. There was real fun in them. But all the pleasure was taken out of the prospect of her first dance in the new world by the discussions that preceded it.

Mr. Sherwood was generous, and Mrs. Sherwood flew from one dress-maker to another in a storm of delight. There was something to work for now—she could display her new gowns before "real people," not to "make-believes." If the Romans when they spoke of men meant no men but Romans, so our women, who make society the limit of their lives, acknowledge the existence of no human beings worth meeting on equal terms outside of society. Mrs. Sherwood felt that she was now in her own world—all other worlds were as nothing to her. She had already begun to plan a great dinner and dance in honor of Katharine and the aristocrat from Dublin. And yet she had her doubts and fears. It was her private opinion that Katharine would prove a failure yet. In the first place, she suddenly found that Katharine was self-willed. Mother Ursula had written this advice to Katharine—

"Social ideas have changed since my time, my dear—you will, of course, follow the advice of your confessor about dancing; but there is one fashion which I hope you will never adopt—that of

the low-cut corsages which have been always usual in what is called 'good society.'"

And so when the ineffable dress-maker, the perfect Kate Reilly, whom Lady Alicia had spoken of to all the quiet Philadelphians, sent home for the first dinner and dance at the Worths' a gown of old rose-color and silver for Katharine, Mrs. Sherwood had, as she said, to endure a "scene."

Katharine tried it on.

"Perfect," Mrs. Sherwood said.

"But," said Katharine, looking at her shoulders where knots of peach blossoms did duty for sleeves, "it is not all here."

Mrs. Sherwood impatiently raised her eyeglass, mounted on a long ebony stick which she had just acquired, and asked—

"What do you mean?"

"It's not all here, aunt; there must be a *fichu* or something for my neck."

"They always go through this 'act' when they come out of convents," murmured Mrs. Sherwood; then she said aloud, with irritation—"What *is* the use of assuming these airs with me? You've been reading some silly nonsense—some Catholic story, like that 'Loretto; or, the Choice,' that I picked up in your room the other day. You must drop religious pretences with me—I am a woman of the world."

"And I am not, aunt," said Katharine, with an air of timidity—Mother Ursula had often told her

to look out for her temper, and her present meekness was the result of hard restraint.

"Well, you must begin to be by conforming to the ideas of society. You look lovely in that gown; it suits you. And Uncle Marcus has promised to give you a pearl necklace."

"I can't wear this dress," said Katharine, firmly. "Why, it is indecent—I have no corsage at all, except this row of peach blossoms and the ribbons!"

"You shall wear it," said Mrs. Sherwood; "it cost your uncle one hundred and fifty dollars; it is a creation."

Katharine's eyes opened.

"Surely my uncle is not so—so kind as to spend so much money as that for a dress for me?" cried Katharine, in genuine distress; "oh, aunt, after this I will make my own clothes!"

Mrs. Sherwood put her hands to her forehead in despair. She could find no words to fit her emotions. Where would the girl end? At this moment a knock came at the door, and Lady Alicia entered, with great coolness.

"I just walked upstairs," she said, "as I found nobody below."

Mrs. Sherwood arose and felt like thanking her for her condescension. The Dublin girl was not a beauty, but she had a fresh complexion and a cheerful face. Her walking-dress was of coarse cloth and she wore the largest and coarsest shoes Mrs. Sherwood had ever seen. She wore a green veil and heavy gloves.

"I've been out for a walk," she said; "ten miles before breakfast. And I thought I'd run over here for luncheon—I like your railway cars."

Mrs. Sherwood, though she hated to walk, made a vow to acquire coarse shoes at once and to talk to her acquaintances about doing ten miles before breakfast; it would be *so* English.

"I'm glad you've come, Lady Alicia."

"Oh, call me 'Biddy,'—nobody at home Lady Alicia's me," she said, taking off her hat unceremoniously; "I'm sick of hearing it over here—there's one fool who visits Mrs. Worth and calls me 'my lady!'"

Mrs. Sherwood laughed a hollow laugh; she wondered what was the use of having one of the aristocracy with one, if one was not to use a title on all occasions. How could she speak to this exalted creature as "Biddy!"

"I'm awfully hungry," said Biddy, taking a rocking chair and then hopping out of it. "How I hate your American chairs—I can't see how any sane being can want to rock backwards and forwards."

Mrs. Sherwood made a resolution never to sit in a rocking-chair again, though she loved the gentle exercise.

"And don't forget," continued Biddy, "to have some Dublin stout for luncheon. We never get any at the Worths'. But it's just too lovely—it's not so nice over here, because of the sea voyage—but it's a symphony, all the same!"

Mrs. Sherwood was horrified.

"You don't actually drink porter at luncheon—" she began.

"Of course we do. I hate American slops,—soda water and stuff—ugh!" And Biddy made a grimace; Mrs. Sherwood's horror amused her. "You know you told me to make myself at home, and I've done it, you see. Oh, what a lovely gown, Kit! It's the smartest thing I've seen!"

"But look at the shoulders—I can't wear it,—I really can't. There's no *fichu*, or lace, or anything with it, Biddy. Don't you see?" said Katharine, earnestly.

"I see that it's perfect. Kate Reilly has surpassed herself," said Lady Alicia, emphatically.

Katharine could not believe the testimony of her ears.

"And you a Catholic, too!" she exclaimed. "I can't understand what you mean. Don't you see the body is too low?"

"Nonsense!" answered her friend. "Why, all the Catholics at the Castle wear gowns just as low—and I'm told there's no difference at the Lord Mayor's, but of course I've never been there—our set doesn't go. But the Lord Lieutenant's balls set the fashion in Dublin. Really, when I was presented, there was only one high gown; it was worn by special permission of the Queen."

A delightful glow permeated Mrs. Sherwood's frame; she was actually on familiar terms with a

young woman who had been presented at court. Who knows? Might not she, by persistent effort, rise to that beatific condition? Other Americans had done so. She turned quickly to Katharine.

"You must wear that gown, child. You needn't be ashamed of your neck and shoulders."

"Of course, Kit!" said her friend. "Everybody wears low gowns. Don't be a prude—the men will avoid you. Convent notions don't go in the world!"

Katharine bit her lip; she looked in the glass and her eyes flashed.

"Convent notions are modest notions, and you know it very well," she said, softly. The Lady Alicia pretended to adjust the tulle flounce, and, as she rose, whispered—

"Don't be a fool, Kit—your aunt is rich—do you want to offend her?" She was not prepared for Katharine's answer, made in her usual voice—

"I would rather offend her than offend God!"

"Oh," said Mrs. Sherwood, sarcastically, "if God is to be dragged into everything—if you are always thinking about Him, you can't live in society—"

She paused and reddened; Biddy was inclined to laugh at the trap into which Mrs. Sherwood, who prided herself on being respectably religious, had fallen.

"I will not live in society then!" said Katharine, throwing a shawl over her shoulders and preparing to leave the room.

Mrs. Sherwood put her hand on the door and confronted her.

"You shock me," she said. "Is this the manner you were taught by the nuns?"

"I will not wear that dress—I don't care what Biddy says!" exclaimed Katharine, her eyes flashing. Mrs. Sherwood imperiously measured her with her eyes. Katharine met the stare undauntedly. Mrs. Sherwood made a rapid calculation. To drive Katharine out of the house would be to drop out of the society she had just entered—it would be to offend Lady Alicia and Mr. Sherwood—to crush all hope of a brilliant social future;—still she was not a woman to give in easily.

"I will speak to your uncle!"

"If my uncle wants me to go out in this dress—if he wants his sister's child to wear—" Katharine's voice trembled; and then gained firmness, "he is not like—himself. Besides, I am determined not to let him pay so much money for me; I cannot let him be so extravagant; I will not be dependent on him for such luxuries!"

Mrs. Sherwood was aghast at the thought of anybody objecting to have good clothes, no matter how they came. She saw that the contest was unequal; she determined to gain time.

"Go—change your dress, my dear," she said; "we will talk of the matter later."

"But I will not wear it—as it is," Katharine said, as she left the room.

Biddy ran after her. "How can you be so silly?" she said. "Do what everybody does. Suppose your aunt should want you to leave the house, what would you do?"

"Go," said Katharine, with a half smile at the prospect of freedom.

"And what would you do?" asked the Lady Alicia, horrified.

"Earn my own living—the Sisters taught me!"

"Horrible!" cried Lady Alicia, "horrible! To leave this house and be a governess or something. You'd lose caste and everything. People would cut you! I had no idea that you were so foolish, from your letters."

"You can 'cut' me, if you don't like me," looking into her friend's eyes with a candor that disarmed her.

"But I do like you," said Biddy, kissing her. "We have never had a long talk yet. American girls are so queer and independent! Hurry!—change your dress, and we'll have a bit of luncheon!"

Mrs. Sherwood had waited patiently, while this dialogue went on in the passage. She occupied herself with worrying about the luncheon. If reed birds were only in season!—if she had known, she could have sent in to Augustin's for some of those delicious oyster croquettes!—she would go down to see the cook at once; she hoped the gardener had some roses—if she had only known that the Lady Alicia St. John was coming!

"Perhaps there is something that you would like for luncheon?" she asked, with touching timidity, as her guest re-entered the room. Suppose she should demand truffled partridge or frogs' legs! She waited for a full minute.

"Only a bit of cold mutton and a bottle of Guinness'—that's all I generally take on the other side," drawled Lady Alicia. "Lady Barstreet, who brought me across on her way to Montreal—I had to have a chaperon, you know—said that your American mutton is bad—is it?"

Mrs. Sherwood at once began to apologize for American mutton—of course it must be bad; it was not English; but American oysters were the best in the world; the Lady Alicia should have some at luncheon; and she hurried away.

When Katharine came back, she found Biddy standing near the window, looking out on the lawn; she had lost something of her look of cheerful impudence. And Katharine fancied that she brushed her handkerchief hastily across her eyes. She said nothing, but the Dublin girl caught her look of sympathy.

"Oh! Kitty," she said, "I wish there were no such thing as money in the world. Here am I—awfully poor!—living among luxuries which seem to be part of my life and which I can only keep by sacrificing my conscience. Your struggle about the gown is a lesson to me—but it makes me sad. I was never taught to follow principle in little things;

for with us on the other side whatever is permitted at court is all right—and I think we Irish are even worse than the English in that way. I think myself our gowns are sometimes a trifle too low; but in society people think it evil-minded to say so. You see a girl that *must* marry must follow the rules of society."

"Why must you marry?" asked Katharine, in amazement.

"To live," said the Lady Alicia, in equal amazement; "if the troubles between the landlords and tenants in Ireland keep up, my income will soon be—nothing."

"I'd rather work—a thousand times!"

"It seems to me you Catholics hold very revolutionary doctrines in America," said Biddy, her old smile breaking out at the sight of Katharine's shining eyes and flushed cheeks. "Would the Sisters approve of your throwing over a rich man merely because he is a Protestant or nothing at all in religion?"

"Of course," said Katharine, taking the Lady Alicia's hand, "you, a great lady, ought to be able to do things easily which a poor little girl like me finds it very hard to do."

Lady Alicia smiled wistfully.

"There is one thing I will do to please you,—I'll wear a high gown at the Worths' on Friday night, to keep you in countenance."

"And you'll set the fashion!" cried Katharine, kissing her.

"It seems like a trifle," said Lady Alicia, thoughtfully, "but even in trifles we Catholics should set a good example. I'll tell you this," she added, archly, "I don't envy the place of Mrs. Sherwood as your chaperon. Whenever you two have a row, call me in. It's better than a play—Good gracious! What's that?"

"The gong for luncheon!"

"What a fuss!" said Biddy. "Why don't she fire off a cannon at once?"

Mr. Sherwood, by chance, was home to luncheon. After the meal, served with roses, pink ices, and pink trimmings of all kinds in five courses, Mrs. Sherwood offered to drive Lady Alicia to the train. Mr. Sherwood asked Katharine if she could sing, and she said "a little."

"And will you?"

"Oh! yes,—with pleasure," she answered; and then, anxious to speak before her aunt came home, she said—"Uncle Marcus, you must not spend so much money for my things."

"Why, child," he said, in surprise, "I haven't."

"Oh, yes, you have—my aunt has bought the loveliest dresses and bonnets; and, though I want to be nicely dressed, yet I am too poor to wear such fine clothes."

"How like her mother!" Uncle Marcus said, smiling, to himself. "You must learn to *take* gracefully—that's an art in itself. I want you to dress as my niece ought to dress—I'm a rich man, dear, as

things go. And you can do what you will in return," he said, kindly. "Give me what you think most—and I don't need money. By the way, you must have an allowance for charities and things of that kind. What will you do for me?"

"I'll say the Rosary for you every day!" she said, with enthusiasm.

"Thank you," he said, with a smile, "but, as I don't know what that is, suppose you give me a song!"

They went into a little ante-room, decorated in white, with a heavy frieze of pink and silver roses, and Katharine sat down at the piano.

"How well she suits all this prettiness," thought her uncle. "A child is very pleasant in the house."

Katharine sang "Mary of Argyle" in a low voice.

"Your mother's song, dear," her uncle said. "Give me another of those old-fashioned songs—one never hears them since the war. When Mrs. Sherwood entered Katharine was just finishing "Listen to the Mocking Bird," arranged for the voice and piano; she sang it very softly, and her uncle was delighted.

"That was written for Harriet Lane, in Buchanan's time, wasn't it?" asked Mr. Sherwood, turning to his wife.

"How should I remember, Marcus?" she asked, with a look of resentment. "Katharine, can't you sing the Ricci Waltz?—or something less old-fashioned and more showy?"

"I don't know the Ricci Waltz."

"Then the 'Fior di Margarita.'"

"I'm very sorry, aunt." And Katharine began in the same low voice, "Du bist wie eine Blume."

Mr. Sherwood liked it—Mrs. Sherwood shrugged her shoulders.

"She'll be a social failure, as sure as I am living," she said to herself. "She can't even sing with spirit—I knew she would be handicapped by a convent education." And then aloud, "I shall send your gown back to be changed—the Lady Alicia St. John says young girls are wearing higher frocks in England this year."

Katharine thanked her, and passed to *Der Erl König*.

"Awful!" said Mrs. Sherwood, aside to her husband. "She can't sing the Ricci Waltz."

"Hush! It's very sweet!"

"But what has sweetness got to do with music nowadays?" demanded his wife. She sighed; that girl had gained one victory.

CHAPTER XI.

Danger.

THE Lady Alicia St. John—or, let us call her, with Katharine, Biddy, since the republican pen is not used to titles—had a good heart and a clear head. But she had been brought up in that most artificial of all societies—the English-Irish set in Dublin. She had come to America simply because she was poor, on the invitation of Mrs. Worth, whom she had met abroad. Her relative, a very amiable French nobleman, had married into the Worth family for the same reason that had brought Biddy St. John to America. The Earl, Biddy's father, could do nothing for her; she had been brought up with the idea that she must settle herself in life—which meant that she must marry well, in a worldly point of view. She had a horror of the middle-class English and Irish men—of those who would be willing to marry her for her title, and who would probably consider her in the light of a slave whom they had bought. She had heard that the rich Americans were more refined, if not so well educated, than the men at home—that their horses and dogs were not held by them as little lower than their wives.

She did not know whether to believe this or not; she determined to see for herself. Biddy knew that marriage was a Sacrament, but the people around her had always talked of it as if it were a mere contract. When others of the St. John family had married, Lord Bolingbroke's man of business had arranged everything. But bad times for Irish landlords had left him nothing to arrange for Lady Alicia; she must be her own woman of business. She was twenty-five years of age, and she began to regard her future with a little anxiety. Her American trip was an experiment; the first scruple about it had been put into her mind by the scene between Mrs. Sherwood and Katharine.

Katharine was a poor girl, without even a title; more dependent than even Lady Alicia herself, and yet she was more powerful, more self-respectful, more capable of arranging her own future than she was. Katharine's scruple about the *décolleté* dress seemed a trifle to Lady Alicia; she had come to believe that most things ordained by society were proper. But there was a principle behind it, and Biddy's Celtic blood—for she was not all Norman—was fired with admiration for a girl who could both detect a principle and stand up for it against all odds. Her relationship to Katharine made her inclined to like her, but now she began actually to love her. She said to herself that, of all the Americans she had met, Katharine was certainly the most original and the most interesting. And, in her heart, she

admitted that the time might come when she would need some of the strength that Katharine evidently had. Biddy had flattered herself that she would do a great deal for Katharine by giving her social *prestige;* she began to see that Katharine did not care for social *prestige*—in fact, had no conception of what it meant.

"I wish I were like her," she said, with a sigh. "Yes—to be like her—I would *almost* be willing to be born an American!"

In the meantime, Mrs. Sherwood was much disquieted. What would the Lady Alicia think of Katharine's nonsense about the dress? Good gracious! —suppose she should take offence at Katharine's crudeness, and drop them altogether. It would mean social ruin, just as prosperity was rosily dawning; she shivered, and determined to speak to Katharine; for the first time in her life, her courage failed, and she spoke to Mr. Sherwood instead.

"The girl is right," Mr. Sherwood said. "I have often felt like throwing a shawl over some of those brazen creatures."

"That was because you were never used to society, Marcus."

"My dear," said Mr. Sherwood, "you may order everything you like for yourself and my niece; I can afford it. Send to Felix at Paris, if you like to make a splurge—but let Katharine alone when she is right. You have been wanting me to give you *carte blanche* about trimmings and fripperies for a long

time; now you have. I want you and the girl to enjoy yourselves."

Mrs. Sherwood was obliged to be content with this. But, after all, what was the use of it? A gown from Felix would be like dust in ashes, if Katharine should take it into her head to shock the right set by some horrid exhibition of what she called "principle."

The Worth dinner and dance soon absorbed all her thoughts; the Percivals would be there—everybody would be there. And next day all the names would be in the *Ledger*, thus putting upon her the final stamp of social beatitude. She closed her eyes and imagined she saw the print—"Mrs. Rittenhouse, Mrs. Biddle, the Lady Alicia St. John, daughter of the Earl of Bolingbroke, Mrs. Marcus Sherwood." Oh, dear!—it was as if she had a glimpse of Paradise. And to think that all this depended on the whim of a girl!

Katharine found a folded check in her room the day after her talk with her uncle. On the envelope was marked, "to do as you please with," in her uncle's writing; and, inside, she read, "you can earn this by singing for me for an hour every evening after dinner!"

Katharine laughed; her uncle knew how to give, she thought. She determined to find out how best to spend it; she had become interested at Our Lady of the Rosary in the condition of the poor in the great cities, and she thought that she could find use

for the hundred dollars her uncle had given her. It seemed a great deal to her; she thought of a hundred things that might be done—each in reality more impossible than the other. Her uncle's kindness gave her new life, and Mrs. Sherwood was somewhat consoled by the interest she showed in different things. Still, she was generally silent and awkward before her aunt; she felt chilled, and she knew that she was at her worst. Katharine's keenest regret about this, was that her aunt threw the blame of it on Mother Ursula and the Sisters. It cost her some tears; in spite of all her efforts, she constantly made mistakes and her lack of knowledge of the latest English "fads" was a sore trial to her. It amused her uncle, who almost fell under the table when Mrs. Sherwood ordered Dublin stout at luncheon the day after Lady Alicia's visit, and tried, with many grimaces, to drink it.

Katharine resolved to find out her poor just as soon as the Worth function was off the carpet. Mrs. Sherwood would not let her out of her sight until then; so she submitted, in hope. It happened that Mrs. Sherwood's day for seeing friends preceded this great assembly; Katharine assisted her in making tea. She attracted no attention whatever, for she kept in the background, behind the big brass samovar—which, as Mr. Sherwood said, was never used, because "he couldn't afford to keep an engineer." She had a lesson, however, in the ways of society. All Mrs. Sherwood's old friends came, for Biddy's

visit had been noised abroad, and half a dozen people had said distinctly to many dozens, that "the Sherwoods had climbed in at last;" so they all came to hear the details, if possible, and in the hope that the Lady Alicia might be there. It was the general opinion, though, that Mrs. Sherwood would keep such a precious social treasure to herself.

Katharine was presented to a number of people, who stared at her in the soft light of the candles and took cups of tea from her with a cool "thank you;" she was only Mrs. Sherwood's niece, with no money and no manner particularly. One old lady, Mrs. Vavasour, who had come all the way from Germantown, to find out whether "that upstart," Mrs. Sherwood, was really invited to the Worth dance, looked tired, and Katharine found the softest chair for her and made an unusually strong cup of tea. The old lady, who had more time than the rest to notice her, made her sit down.

"Do you play or sing?" asked old Mrs. Vavasour, drinking the tea to the dregs. "And, by the way, that's a very sweet cup—real Dresden, I'm sure, and there must be twenty of them—where do these people get their money? I knew your aunt, my dear, when she lived two doors from Willing's Alley—and glad enough she was if I noticed her. My mother," said the old lady, in an awful tone, "was a Wister."

"Dear me!" said Katharine, not quite sure whether this was the name of a religious sect or not. "Have some more tea?"

The old lady would, and did; she grew more comfortable, and some of her wrinkles seemed to disappear. The velvet leaves and flowers on her bonnet nodded complacently.

"It is strange how some people can climb," she went on; "now, though my mother was a Wister, I'm out of everything because I'm poor—for money counts for everything in Philadelphia now—and here's this Sherwood woman getting ahead, and with no particular blood in her veins."

"Mrs. Sherwood is my aunt," said Katharine, gently.

"I don't see that that fact gives her any special claim to consideration," said the old lady, with sharpness.

Katharine blushed, and murmured that she did not mean—

"No matter," said the old lady, "I just want to tell you that if you are not rich, you'll never be anybody here. Look at me; I'm half a Wister, and yet I am glad to come and drink tea at a fourth-class house!"

The old lady seemed to be so much moved by her degradation, that she swallowed her tea at a gulp and asked for a third cup. Katharine, pitying her, brought her the plate with the freshest chocolate wafers. The old lady softened more and more.

"I wish somebody would play," she said, "it's such a help to conversation. Everybody is so quiet, and I am sure they have been listening to what I

have said." There was no doubt of this, for Mrs. Vavasour's voice was very shrill. There was a suppressed titter, and Mrs. Sherwood's smile had a petrified look. Katharine saw at once that, in mercy to her aunt, the old lady's flow of conversation ought to be stopped.

"I'll play something—if you'll excuse me," she said, with a manner in direct contrast to her usual awkwardness under her aunt's eye.

"No—no," said the old lady. "Herr Teufelfisch is coming to-day—nobody but vulgar rich people can afford to hire professionals for an afternoon tea. And, besides, your aunt says you're from some Catholic boarding-school, where they're now great for music. Come; talk to me. Your aunt's father had a fish stall in Second Street—"

Katharine broke away; the expression on her aunt's face was agonizing; her heart was filled with pity—what a terrible thing "society" was, if it made one so unhappy about such a small thing! She went to the piano, and, forgetting everything but her desire to help her aunt to escape Mrs. Vavasour's shrill revelations, she touched the keys and began the prelude to a bit from Rubenstein's "Lost Paradise." She chose it because she could make it the loudest musical thing she knew. Crash went the prelude; Mrs. Vavasour raised her eyeglass in amazement. Then the *fortissimo* movement ceased, and Katharine's voice arose above the rippling accompaniment. She was not self-conscious now;

her voice, well-trained and naturally good, filled the room; she had only one desire—to drown Mrs. Vavasour's talk.

"I don't know what to think," the old lady said; "she quite takes my breath away."

After this, knowing that she had secured silence, Katharine sang "Du bist wie eine Blume."

Her aunt looked around uneasily, prepared to make an apology for amateurishness, defective training, etc. The song went on, and everybody listened. Mrs. Sherwood, whose traditions were those of the Ricci Waltz and all manner of *fiorituri*, was of the opinion that Katharine was making a fool of herself. As Katharine was finishing, there was a stir at the door, and Herr Teufelfisch entered. He was old and bent, his hair brushed straight up from his forehead and bristling with defiance. His piercing black eyes were almost hidden under heavy white eyebrows; he made a circular bow to the assembly, waved his long and knotted fingers to somebody who offered him a chair, and said impatiently to Mr. Wirt Percival, who accompaned him,—

"Ah, you good-for-nothing! Be still—there is music!"

Wirt Percival stood very straight. The ladies declared to one another in whispers that he looked very well. An immense gardenia adorned the lapel of a frock coat which reached almost to his heels and nearly covered his pearl-colored trousers; he held a brilliantly polished tall hat in his hand and gazed,

with the expression of a man carved out of wood, at the piano.

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Vavasour's shrill voice, "he's quite too perfectly English!"

Herr Teufelfisch gave her a terrible look from beneath his brows. Katharine ended and rose from the piano. Nobody dared to say anything until Herr Teufelfisch had spoken;—was it good or bad? The old German soon settled that question. He went up to Katharine and took her hand.

"You are young, *mein fraulein*," he said, looking at her kindly. She met his eyes without embarrassment—she liked the old man's face. "Already you sing well—you have been *taught*—you have been *taught*. I like your method almost as well as that of the young lady who sang with Herr von Bülow, when he was in this country. But you must not play your accompaniments—I will play."

He took the seat, and, pointing to a song by Schumann, began the prelude. Katharine, feeling as if Sister Cunegunda were playing for her, sang her best.

"I am pleased," the old man said; and he played a War Polonaise of his own composition; but, above it, could be heard, Mrs. Vavasour's voice—

"The girl seems clever—but neither Mr. nor Mrs. Sherwood have any relations that are not positively low-class. So she's going to the Worth's——"

The polonaise thundered—and Katharine thanked Heaven! Wirt Percival came to her side; he was sincerely fond of music.

"You have given me a great pleasure," he said. "Thanks, awfully."

"You are kind."

"Will you be my partner for the cotillon to-morrow night?" he asked, with more warmth than his manner permitted him to show usually.

"Certainly," Mrs. Sherwood said, before Katharine could speak.

Herr Teufelfisch had reached a *piano* passage in his composition, and Mrs. Vavasour was heard—

"Yes, dear, she means to catch Wirt for the niece —well, Marcus Sherwood can afford to marry his niece, but I shouldn't think——"

"Fortissimo!" unconsciously whispered Katharine to Herr Teufelfisch.

The old gentleman stopped, bristling with rage, in the middle of a passage—

"You mean to write my music for me, young lady?" he demanded. There was an awful silence. Percival looked at Katharine; her eyes were full of laughter. Mrs. Vavasour's voice broke out.

"Ah, I see," said Herr Teufelfisch. "You want to stop that old woman's tongue! It is well." And he thundered through the rest of the polonaise.

As people took their leave, Katharine received much attention; as Mr. Sherwood would have said, "Her stock had gone up."

"You'll come and sing for me on Thursday, at my little tea," said Mrs. Vavasour, at parting.

"No," said Mrs. Sherwood, as she kissed the dear old lady on both cheeks, "no, my dear—Katharine really can't sing for you, for she is engaged for a duet at my *musicale* with her cousin, the Lady Alicia St. John. I don't intend that she shall sing to your old people in Germantown—they're nearly all deaf, you know, by this time."

Mrs. Vavasour grinned. Tears came into Katharine's eyes; how heartless this was! She took the old lady's limp hand and said—

"I'll come another time—with pleasure!" Mrs. Vavasour actually looked grateful, Mrs. Sherwood frowned, and Wirt Percival swore to himself that he had found the one woman that suited him.

CHAPTER XII.

A Proposal.

IT was Mr. Percival's private opinion that Katharine would be entirely spoiled by her entrance into that charmed circle which people called "society," and which was only one of a hundred circles calling themselves by that name. He was interested in her; he regretted, though, that she had not had a better preparation for life, for it was his opinion, too, that convent training left a young woman without the self-dependence necessary in this world of to-day. She was a study; he had never met anybody like her, and he determined to watch the effect of the new life on her and to step in and avert disaster, if it should be necessary.

When Katharine entered the Worth drawing-room on the night of the dinner and cotillon, she felt that she was indeed in the great world—the dazzling world, of which she had dreamed. The Worths, though in Mrs. Vavasour's opinion, only new people, had since the advent of the Lady Alicia, been received everywhere—for who could turn his back on an Earl's daughter? They had a country-seat which had formerly belonged to an old Tory family

and lately they had attained to one of the best houses in Walnut Street. Katharine was delighted with the air of magnificent distance in this fine old room. Lady Alicia had told the Worths that gas was vulgar, and the whole apartment glowed with the light of innumerable wax candles, under soft shades.

The dinner table, strewn with lilies and orchids and softened by red light, glittering with glass, and brilliant with color, gave Katharine great pleasure, for she was very susceptible to light and color and music. The guests for the cotillon were not expected until eleven o'clock; at eight the few chosen ones who were to dine with the host and hostess were at the table, and the great event began.

To Katharine it was a great event; she had heard of the splendor of the world, and she was not disappointed. But where were the serpents under the roses against which she had been warned?

There was Biddy, very stately and rather preoccupied, next to old Mr. Worth; on his left was Mrs. Percival. They were not serpents. And Wirt Percival, in a baggy evening suit, which was ostentatiously English and ill-fitting, seemed so genial and beaming, that he could not be one of those serpents. There were the dark-eyed, languid Marquis Darcy de Grandmont, who had married into the Worth family, Ferdinand Carey, Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood, the Marquise Darcy de Grandmont, stout and good-natured, May and Gertrude Worth, Alfred Deveril, Herr Teufelfisch, Mr. Percival, and Walter Dillon.

The young men and the girls Katharine did not know—but they looked too happy to be instruments of evil. Katharine, as she took her soup, said to herself that she was afraid the only wickedness in this new world lay in her own heart. How lovely it all was! Everybody seemed pleased with everybody else—how softly they talked and how gently the butler filled the glasses and served things and commanded his assistants! It was an education to be present at such an assembly—surely a meeting like this represented the flower of civilization! If these charming people only had the light of Faith, how complete it would all be.

While Katharine's thoughts were thus occupied, she was under the closest scrutiny. She did not suspect it, for everybody seemed otherwise engaged. The Lady Alicia was stately and distinguished in a Medici gown, with a great cascade of pearls falling from her neck to the edge of her corsage, May and Gertrude Worth were bright and blonde and pretty, but Katharine, her well-poised head rising from the tulle and peach-blossom draped artistically over her bosom, had an air which set her apart. There was no doubt about it—she was a "new flavor in society," as the Marquis put it—and everything that is new in a certain way is sure to be successful. She was more distinguished than Lady Alicia, more beautiful than the Worth girls—though people had never hitherto considered her beautiful. The circle of society is so limited that people get tired of seeing

the same faces at dinner tables and assemblies. Katharine's face was new. This was one secret of the attention she drew to herself. She had achieved simplicity without knowing it; the nuns had given her a manner which was without a trace of self-consciousness. They had taught her not to wrinkle her face unnecessarily in meaningless smiles and foolish contortions, and she spoke the English language clearly and distinctly—a rare thing in a set where imitations of the worst English accent and slipshod, nasal enunciation was the rule. Mr. Percival said to himself that the women who had turned out this young girl from their school knew how to teach. There was Gertrude Worth, recently from a famous "female" college, who was great in microscopy and a budding biologist, who "guessed" constantly, and when she did not "guess" substituted "I fawncy" for it, and whose face became one mass of wrinkles whenever she put on her "society manner."

Katharine had Herr Teufelfisch on one side and Walter Dillon on the other. Herr Teufelfisch did not speak after the soup had been removed. He intended to play Wagnerian music after dinner, and he was preparing for it. His knife went backwards and forwards, well laden with delicious morsels and plunged deep into his mouth with each morsel—for the *musicker* had no intention of changing his Viennese habits, to suit American prejudices. He smiled benignly at Katharine and bade the servant offer her a salmis of duck which he found particularly inter-

esting. Her neighbor on the other side did not speak for some time. He was a tall, slight man, not over twenty-five, with a flush on his cheeks, a high collar, and a large white flower in his button-hole. At last with an effort, he said:

"Do you go out much, Miss—I beg pardon, but I did not catch your name when I was presented."

"O'Conor—and I did not catch yours."

"People never do—the professional introducer sees to that. My name is Dillon—Walter Dillon, Miss O'Conor—and I am an architect," he said, gaining some courage, as he caught Katharine's look of amusement; she really was not so impressive and depressing as most young women were, in full regalia, at the beginning of a dinner party. Katharine noticed that he had red hair closely cropped, and she took courage. There was a girl at school, Angelina Dillon, who had red hair. After all, it was a relief to find somebody that reminded her of home in all this splendor; and a reminiscence of Angelina Dillon's red hair was very home-like. Perhaps this young man might be related to her. She would ask him, after a time. Old Mr. Worth was saying something in a low tone to Biddy, and Biddy was answering with the greatest attention. Katharine wished she was nearer to them. People in Mrs. Craven's novels always said such interesting things at dinner parties—and Biddy, who looked very serious, was probably showing off some of the brilliancy she had acquired in royal circles.

"Pardon me, Lady Alicia," said Mrs. Sherwood, who was in her seventh heaven and anxious not to lose any pearl that might fall from the exalted people around her, "I caught a word—"

"The Lady Alicia was just saying that green turtle soup is much dearer in her country than here; it is quite a luxury here," Mr. Worth said.

"You have not the asparagus here that we have in France—it is great, grand, fat," said the Marquis, smiling.

Subdued talk followed this.

"When will the conversation begin?" asked Katharine, when she had refused wine several times and rejected various delicacies which Herr Teufelfisch, with his mouth full, pointed out to her.

"If you sing, you must eat, *mein fraulein*," he said, sentimentally.

"The conversation?" repeated Dillon, "I suppose that it has begun. Why, are you disappointed?"

"I expected to hear somebody talk—not about green turtle and asparagus, but about—about—oh, about real things—books and politics and—everything," said Katharine, vaguely, but earnestly.

"But that wouldn't be in good form, you know—people always avoid that sort of thing at dinner."

"Why?"

"Oh, because one might make other people uncomfortable by talking over their heads."

"I suppose that's the reason you avoid saying anything brilliant," said Katharine, mischievously.

"I really beg pardon—but we must account for it in some way."

Dillon looked at her with more interest and smiled.

"You don't know how brilliant I can be. In fact, I don't mind telling you that this is one of my first dinner parties. I'm a working man, you know—and I suspect that Mrs. Vavasour's been making such a row about the old families being neglected because they are poor, that Mrs. Worth felt obliged to invite me, because my mother's is an old family. And I came, I don't mind telling you, because I hope that Mr. Worth will give me the job of remodelling this old house—I wish he would. If I were rich I'd build a house for the Marquis just for the advertisement!"

"But Lady Alicia says the dinner talks in Dublin are very brilliant; that everything sparkles, and the women all have such musical voices—listen—"

"She is speaking to the poet—Mr. Deveril's a poet, you know; he is from Boston—poets don't grow in Philadelphia, you know—listen!—"

"Oh, I assure you it's quite different over there," Biddy was saying in a high voice—"nobody *ever* carries a package in the streets of Dublin. People here don't seem to mind it."

Katharine was disappointed at this; she strained her hearing to hear the golden words the poet was evidently about to utter.

"Yes," he answered, with the same gracious air of attention that characterized all the talkers, "we sometimes carry things wrapped up in paper."

"Dear me!" Katharine murmured. "But there! —the poet is going to speak again!—he is answering Lady Alicia's question!"

"It is a calumny," Mr. Deveril was saying, with a smile, "we always eat pork and beans on Sunday morning in Boston, but not every day."

"I hope you will transfer those 'pearls of thought' to your note-book, Miss O'Conor," said her neighbor, maliciously.

"It is too bad," said Katharine, "I am disappointed! But you can assuage my despondency by saying something clever yourself."

"By all means," said Dillon, assuming an air of solemnity, "when I am about to be brilliant I always assume this look. Before I came to this dinner, I read up letter 'J' in an encyclopedia of biography —that is my way of preparing to be brilliant. 'J.' —Dr. Johnson. Do you remember the anecdote of Goldsmith's saying that, if Dr. Johnson put little fishes into a story, he would make them talk like whales?"

"Of course I do!" said Katharine.

"It's bad form for you to say that. How can I be brilliant, if you know all I am going to say? You should say: 'Oh, Mr. Dillon, it must be very clever—do tell me.' But, as you have spoiled my first attempt to be brilliant under the letter 'J,' I shall have to use my anecdote in some way or other —for I can't afford to waste it. I prepared myself with one brilliant English and with one brilliant American anecdote."

Katharine was amused. Mr. Dillon seemed kind and friendly; she put up her fan and laughed. It seemed wrong to laugh aloud when the servants were solemnly handing an entrée around.

"You dared me to be brilliant—here goes!" Dillon whispered. "Mr. Worth," he said, addressing the host, "your delicious white fish reminded me of an amusing thing that happened to me the first winter after I left college; I was very sophomoric, you know—used big words—sonorous words."

"Ah—yes, indeed—just so," Mr. Worth said, politely.

"One day at luncheon—we had white fish, but not with a sauce like yours, by the way—a fellow said, 'Dillon, if you sophomores put little white fishes into stories, you'd make them talk like whales!'"

"Oh, don't," whispered Katharine, expecting to see Mr. Dillon crushed under general resentment of his audacity.

"How clever!" said Mrs. Worth.

"*Trés spirituel!*" said the Marquis.

And everybody laughed.

"Now *you* may be brilliant," Dillon said to Katharine, "suppose you make yourself the heroine of the George-Washington cherry-tree episode. I'll lead up to it, if you like. I'll ask, Were you ever in Virginia? and you can say, "When I was in Virginia, I had a cherry tree and a little hatchet, and—"

Katharine was terrified at the young man's boldness.

"Do hush—they'll find you out!"

"I don't think they will—if they do, they will be too well-bred to say so here. If somebody doesn't talk, I shall have to be brilliant again!"

"I think you have been brilliant enough for one night. Do you really arrange topics of conversation in that way before you go out?"

"I have to," said her neighbor, gravely. "I can't talk shop, you see—gargoyles, and oriel windows, and front elevations would not do. For instance," he continued, with a glimmer of mischief in his eyes, "in order to vary my conversation, I glanced at an American dictionary of biography and fell by chance upon the Ds—Depew. That reminded me of an anecdote told by Mr. Chauncey Depew. I change it a little and it fits *me!*"

"Oh, don't!" said Katharine, laughing in spite of herself.

"If somebody would only give me a chance—would you mind turning the conversation to pie?"

"To pie!" said Katharine, surprised.

"We eat a great deal of pie in America," said Mr. Worth, catching the word which Katharine had spoken rather loud. "Have you noticed it, Lady Alicia?"

"Do you mean tarts?" asked Lady Alicia—saying to herself, "upon my word, Kitty and that young Dillon are getting on famously."

Mr. Dillon had his chance.

"That reminds me," he said, with a serious face, "that once at a party, I tried to tell a little story, and I was squelched. It happened that, stopping at a country hotel—where they have women waiters, you know, I was asked by one of them, a very pert young creature, what I would have for dessert, and she ran down the list glibly—lemon pie, raisin, custard, mince, pumpkin, raspberry, apple." And I said just as glibly—'lemon, raisin, custard, mince, pumpkin, raspberry!' 'What's the matter with the apple?' she demanded, with concentrated pertness. Well, the lady next to me actually asked—'What was the matter with the apple pie?'"

There was silence, except for a faint giggle from Katharine. A cold perspiration came out on Mr. Dillon. Mrs. Sherwood raised her eye-glasses and asked, "What *was* the matter with the apple pie?"

Mr. Dillon gasped.

"There was no apple pie," he said, subsiding and whispering to Katharine. "I have been too brilliant. Did you ever see such a stupid woman?"

"She is my aunt," said Katharine, maliciously.

Mr. Dillon said no more; he bowed his head over his sherbet, and when the long dinner ended, gave Katharine his arm, looking very penitent. His by-play had been the one redeeming point of this tiresome ceremony. How could people endure this sort of thing night after night? she asked herself.

About eleven o'clock the guests invited to the cotillon began to arrive. In the meantime, Herr Teufelfisch had played something of Wagner's and something of his own; and he had made Katharine sing one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder*. Her aunt was afraid she would make a fool of herself, but everybody seemed pleased. She did, however, think that Katharine made a fool of herself when the cotillon began. Wirt Percival, who was to head the dance, led Katharine to a chair in the large ring.

"I'm afraid I don't know it," she said; "I'm sure it is very pretty—but you had better let me sit it out."

"It's very easy," Wirt said; "the first figure will be the flower figure. We all waltz, you know, and each woman pins one of those bunches of roses on her partner's coat, and then—"

"But I can't waltz," said Katharine, "and I am not sure—oh, you must excuse me!"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Sherwood, from the chaperons' seats, near which Katharine was standing.

"Let her give out the favors," suggested Mrs. Percival, who understood Katharine's scruples.

"Carey can take my place," said Wirt Percival, "I can't dance without a partner. I will help Miss O'Conor to give out the favors."

"That girl's a fool!" hissed Mrs. Sherwood. "I could shake her—why can't she dance like other people?"

Mrs. Percival overheard her; her eyes flashed—

"She has her reasons, which I understand."

The two women looked at each other, smiled, and declared war. Everybody said that Wirt Percival must have found a great attraction in Katharine, to induce him to give up his favorite dance. He led Katharine to the table which was heaped with flowers, false faces, tinselled toys of all kinds, swords, and little flags.

"I shall reassume the leadership for one figure and introduce the minuet, with these swords and three-cornered hats. You will dance that, will you not?"

"With pleasure," Katharine answered, gratefully; it was certainly kind of him to give up his dance. But yet he seemed to find pleasure in helping her to give out the favors for each figure.

Ferdinand Carey and Lady Alicia led the first intricate figures with grace and enjoyment. The music was delightful; Katharine could hardly keep her feet still; Wirt watched her face, intent with almost childish interest on the mazes of the cotillon.

"You would like to dance?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she said, "I can never hear music without wanting to dance. No—don't ask me—I will not waltz; I don't think it is wrong for anybody else, but it would be against my conscience!"

He smiled, and looked at her admiringly. Lady Alicia was certainly very distinguished, and she had a title, but Katharine was by all odds the more

attractive. He blew the beribboned whistle he held in his hand, and announced the minuet.

"Now she will surely make a fool of herself," murmured her aunt, putting up her eyeglass. But no—with crimson cheeks and bright eyes she glided over the floor with the grace of a swan, and when it came to the courtesy, Mr. Percival said—

"By Jove, those nuns have preserved for their pupils all the old grace of Versailles!"

Katharine enjoyed it thoroughly; and the great tinselled fan she received in the last figure pleased her mightily; it should go the first thing in the morning to her little Spanish pet at the convent. Mrs. Sherwood gained courage as Katharine's grace in the minuet was remarked and began to explain that it was Katharine's first appearance; she had never been even "brought out" formally.

"Well, she is very much out," said Mrs. Worth, cordially, "and, if Ferdinand Carey's eyes mean anything, she will soon go out of your chaperonage, Mrs. Sherwood."

Mrs. Sherwood smiled, but looked anxious; she preferred that Wirt Percival should be the man; a glance at him reassured her; he was fanning Katharine with his three-cornered hat, while a band of zithers stationed behind a group of orange trees played the *lieder* Katharine had sung. Which would it be? Mr. Dillon sulked in a corner of the room, and the poet was writing an autograph on May Worth's fan—Mrs. Sherwood saw with relief that the detrimentals were out of the way.

At last the bright movements of the dance were over and the supper table was like the hackneyed broken rainbow—a mass of fragmentary colors. Ferdinand Carey helped Katharine with her wraps. Young Percival had disappeared.

Once inside the carriage, Katharine gave a sigh of relief—

"The minuet was lovely, uncle," she said, "but I am glad the whole thing is over. The nicest person there was that Mr. Dillon. Mr. Percival is too serious—he actually asked me to marry him. Perhaps he was in fun!"

"And what did you say?" gasped her aunt.

"Oh, I said no, of course—how could I marry anybody so soon, and a non-Catholic, too!"

Mrs. Sherwood actually shook Katharine.

"You don't mean it!"

"I do," said Katharine, annoyed.

"And you refused the best match in town for a silly scruple—oh, Marcus, what a fool this girl is!"

"I know, aunt, that if you do not quit pinching and shaking me, I shall get out and walk!" said Katharine.

Her uncle was bewildered, and Mrs. Sherwood had hysterics as soon as she reached home. Katharine went, like a criminal, to her room. Once there, she found consolation in those Mysteries of the Rosary, which were as a well of clear water in a desert.

CHAPTER XIII.

Katharine Pleases Her Aunt.

WIRT PERCIVAL was a man of impulses, and these impulses were generally right or wrong, according to circumstances. The impulses of a well-regulated man are generally right, and those of a good woman always right; but Wirt had never known discipline or real self-control. People said that he was a very amiable young man; he did not drink to excess; he was rich, handsome, and society admired him secretly because he had, while in England, become the close friend of the Duke of Caithness and had entertained him during the Duke's visit to Philadelphia, at his country seat. He was "very English," everybody said—sensible people smiled at his Anglomania and predicted that it would pass away. Other people rather envied his affectations and imitated them in a humbler way. But had he been ill-tempered and ugly, Wirt Percivil would have been regarded by such women as Mrs. Sherwood was a social archangel. He was rich; he was received everywhere; when he went abroad, his wife—if he should marry—would be presented at court under the most favorable circum-

stances; he had a house in one of the best streets in the city and a country place that was truly desirable in every particular. He dressed faultlessly; he had even been asked several times to go over to the Patriarchs' balls in New York, to lead the cotillon. What more could any human being desire? He had proposed to Katharine on the impulse of the moment. It would certainly have been a greater distinction to be the husband of the Lady Alicia St. John, whose name would have gone very well with his own, and fitted in with that of his place, Bolingbroke. But Katharine's brightness and simplicity had upset his calculations. She had a "new flavor;" she was very unlike all the young girls in his set, many of whom had been elaborately over-trained for "society,"—who knew to a dot whether they were to be demure or gay and whose social life was a bit of constant acting. The Lady Alicia attracted him; but she was somewhat too self-assertive for him; besides, she dressed badly, and this, in the eyes of the fastidious Wirt, almost counterbalanced the glorious fact that she had been trained in all the English ways. Besides, the Lady Alicia, was not properly impressed with the importance of the Percivals, and she had actually laughed at his English accent.

"Faith!" she had said, "where did you pick it up—in the waters under the earth?"

He had not taken Katharine's refusal as final. But Mrs. Sherwood did not know this; she was in despair. Katharine was up very early, on the morn-

ing after the cotillon. She was at Mass, when Mrs. Sherwood came down to breakfast, prepared for open war. Her husband, engaged with his newspaper and his egg, was unsympathetic.

"I am glad Katharine had the pluck to refuse that imitation Cockney," he said, as he took another cup of coffee. "It was impertinent in him to ask her on such a short acquaintance."

"He is the best match of the season—only think of it!—he is a Percival, with money, family, everything! What a push upwards it would have given us! Oh, Marcus," she added, with irritation, "I wish you would learn that people don't shake hands in the old way any more—it's quite gone out. Last night when Mrs. Worth dropped her hand into yours with a beautiful curve of her arm, you actually grabbed—yes, grabbed her fingers."

"I don't understand these new-fashioned ways. When the old woman clawed me, I just gave her hand a hearty shake. What nonsense! If you plague me in this way, my dear, I'll slip out of the whole thing and let you run the society end of our household alone," Mr. Sherwood said placidly; "but I insist that you will not badger Katharine about this young idiot of a Percival. He is not good enough for her."

"Not good enough!" Mrs. Sherwood almost screamed. "You forget he is a Percival and rich, and she's nobody and has nothing!"

"You forget that she is my niece. And, in a few days, I shall have made a financial arrangement which will make her independent. I guess, too, that if this Lady St. John were asked, she would give her opinion in favor of Katharine's ancestry against your Percivals."

"The Irish kings—and all that," answered Mrs. Sherwood, with a sneer.

Mr. Sherwood made no reply. Katharine ran hastily upstairs, and, having asked for a cup of coffee, applied herself to the consideration of Kathleen O'Meara's "Madame Mohl." She trembled at every passing footstep; she was prepared for a storm. Her aunt was engaged for a luncheon of the Society of Women of Culture at one o'clock and for a session of the Browning at four, and so she felt safe, but she knew that the storm must come.

During the afternoon Mrs. Percival called for the first time. She asked carelessly for Mrs. Sherwood, but did not attempt to conceal the fact that her visit was really to Katharine. Mrs. Percival, who prided herself on her irreproachable good breeding, did not hesitate to lift her head high in the air and to say scornfully before the servant, as she looked around the elaborately furnished drawing-room:

"Money!—absolutely, the very air smells of money!"

She waited disdainfully until Katharine appeared. She greeted her effusively, kissing her on both cheeks.

"You're just a little out of place in all this *parvenu* splendor, my dear," she said, "and by the way, I wish you'd just order a cup of tea for me—or, better, make it yourself, while I talk, if that big pile of tea-cups on the table is intended for use at all. I do not see why people will crowd their rooms with all sorts of useless odds and ends of china. But, as they are here, do make some use of them."

Katharine lit the alcohol lamp and rang for water. She was glad to make tea for Mrs. Percival, for she felt nervous and the occupation soothed her.

"There," said Mrs. Percival, "give me that Belleek cup—the one like an eggshell. Thanks." She watched Katharine with some eagerness, drinking her tea slowly, when Katharine had made it, and chattering about indifferent things. "So your aunt's out," she said, "how lucky!—I mean how unlucky! Still, perhaps it is just as well; I want to have a quiet talk with you."

Katharine took a cup of tea, and sat down in a low chair near the window. The light fell on her hair, and turned some of the tendrils of it to a red gold. It was unruly hair, and there were always tendrils loosening themselves from the smooth bands. Her long lashes, slightly drooping, showed a glint of the deep blue of her eyes, and her cheeks had just a tint of red. Mrs. Percival noticed the graceful curves in which her white gown fell about the low chair, and said to herself:

"Our little convent bird is a swan, after all,—but how adorably sweet and simple! how docile and amiable! I am glad that Wirt has a good temper; an angry word would drive this lovely girl to Ophelia's death."

Mrs. Percival was sentimental at times. She patted Katharine gently on the cheek.

"My dear," she said, "do you know why I came?"

"To see my aunt," answered Katharine, her eyelashes still down over her eyes.

Mrs. Percival laughed.

"You are very sly. Your aunt is doubtless a very good woman, but I assure you people who live in Kenwood, no matter how rich they may be, are not generally on my visiting list. I came, my dear, to wish you joy, and to hope that you will be happy. You are a great success—everybody from *you know who* to Herr Teufelfisch is raving about you. And the Marquis says that you speak French like a Tourainais. I never thought that Wirt would take such a fancy to anybody outside of our set. I saw last night that he was smitten, and I shall be charmed to have you as a niece."

Mrs. Percival expected a flood of tears and some incoherent words of gratitude. She felt like a King Cophetua raising up the beggar-maid. Katharine looked at her suddenly, with a flash in her blue eyes.

"Tell me all about it, dear, somebody may interrupt us. Wirt didn't confide in me, but I know

something has happened. What do you think of the dear boy?"

"I think," said Katharine, "that he was very impudent."

Mrs. Percival stared.

"Impudent!"

"I certainly do," said Katharine, a blue light flashing from her eyes; "he seemed to imagine last night that he had only to ask me—*me*, who knew nothing at all about him—to be his wife, and that was all. Fancy—I scarcely knew him at all!"

"You know that he is Wirt Percival—my nephew—and you call him impudent to *me!*"

"You have sneered at my aunt," returned Katharine, in her soft voice, "and I fancy I may imitate your good breeding in giving my opinion of your nephew."

Mrs. Percival put down her tea-cup, and looked at Katharine in amazement.

"Do you mean to tell me that you did not feel the honor of a proposal from Wirt Percival?"

"I am not sure that I did, under the circumstances. I do not know much about proposals of marriage. I imagine that I should regard a proposal from any honest man as an honor, if his regard for me was based on esteem; but your nephew knows as little about me as I know about him. Don't let us talk about it, Mrs. Percival, he has probably forgotten his foolishness by this time, and I forgive him."

"You *forgive* him!" repeated Mrs. Percival, dumbfounded. "Do you know that half the girls in town would go wild with joy if Wirt said the things to them that he said to you."

"Probably," said Katharine, smiling a little. "How is Mr. Percival? I think he is so much nicer than his nephew."

Mrs. Percival was reduced to silence. She felt that to repeat that Wirt was a Percival would be very ineffective in this case, as the Percivals to Katharine were not any better known than the Robinson Crusoes. She was ashamed to talk of Wirt's wealth—that might look vulgar. She had sense enough to see that Katharine was loyal to her aunt, and truthful; she was at once struck with anger and admiration. She determined to play a last card.

"You know," she said, "that Wirt inherited all the Brown-Rittenhouse diamonds from his mother."

Katharine laughed.

"Oh, dear Mrs. Percival," she said, "let us be friends. I am not fond of diamonds—besides, my uncle will give me all the jewels I want. Some of the other girls who are fond of your nephew can have the diamonds."

"You have been reading too many novels. Did the nuns teach you that you should prefer obscurity to a good marriage?"

"The nuns taught me that Matrimony is a Sacrament," answered Katharine, gravely, "and not an affair of diamonds."

Mrs. Percival could not meet this with a sneer, as Mrs. Sherwood would have done—she was a Catholic herself.

"Do you mean to say that you have given Wirt to understand that—"

"I told him," said Katharine, hastily, "that, even if I liked him I could not marry outside the Church."

"*I* married outside the Church," said Mrs. Percival, "and my marriage has not been unhappy. Well-bred people do not constantly thrust religion upon each other."

A few moments before this conversation Mrs. Percival was only half-satisfied with Katharine as the prospective wife for her nephew. Now Katharine's honest and straightforward position had given her a very high place in Mrs. Percival's eyes. She was irritated, and yet she felt that Katharine was worthy of the honor Wirt had paid her. Besides, Mrs. Percival, having a will of her own, would have liked to conquer Katharine's. Katharine, with heightened color, rose, and busied herself with the tea-things. Mrs. Percival rose, too, and shook out her various frills and bugles.

"I can only say that you are a very courageous girl to refuse Wirt Percival. If you had any social perspective, you would know that you are losing an opportunity to be a leader in the best society in America. After this, you can't, of course, expect the same courtesies from our set—" Mrs. Percival caught the look in Katharine's eyes, paused and

blushed. It was not a look of reproach or regret or of scorn. It was simply one of surprise.

"I believe," muttered Mrs. Percival to herself, "that I am as capable of being vulgar as Mrs. Sherwood."

She did not kiss Katharine; she nodded her head in a stately way, and said good-bye. She went away, utterly dissatisfied with herself; nobody knew better than she how difficult a mixed marriage was, even under the most favorable conditions, and yet vanity and family pride were causing her to be angry with Katharine for refusing to make one.

Katharine returned to "Madame Mohl," and gradually forgot her agitation. She began to think that, after all, outside of the Sisters, books were the best friends that one could have.

Mr. Sherwood did not appear at dinner. He had been obliged to go to New York for a week, and the summons had come unexpectedly. Apprised of this by one of the servants, Katharine, attired in one of her pretty light dresses, went to meet her aunt, with a heavy heart.

In the meantime, Mrs. Sherwood had made her plan. She rejoiced at the absence of her husband; it made the way clear. She had become so accustomed to the telling of what the "social" world calls "tirra-diddles," that a lie more or less—for a good purpose, of course—made no difference to her. She had been "almost wild" at the thought of the social advantages Katharine was tearing from her by her refusal of

Wirt Percival. It *must* not be, she said over and over to herself. She was convinced that no merely mercenary motive could touch Katharine; she resolved to touch her heart.

Mrs. Sherwood had a certain respect for Katharine, founded on the incomprehensible fact that other people admired her; she neither admired nor liked her, and she honestly believed that Katharine had concealed her accomplishments simply with a view of mortifying her. Katharine had seemed like a fool,—but suddenly she had begun to be the belle of the season. Nevertheless, Mrs. Sherwood held that she was a fool; for only a fool would throw away a chance of the highest social elevation for a mere scruple of conscience,—and only a fool would let her heart speak where the head should be supreme. To the heart of this fool she resolved to appeal with a lie,—which, as she said to herself, nobody but an inexperienced fool in the ways of the world would believe.

Mrs. Sherwood and Katharine sat opposite each other at the round table. A yellow-covered lamp in its centre cast a soft light on the two women,—Mrs. Sherwood, erect, haughty, smiling; Katharine, thoughtful and pale, with a huge bunch of white pansies near her plate, which seemed to give her a certain consolation, as the stiff dinner proceeded,—for Mrs. Sherwood never omitted a course or a wine, no matter who was absent. When the coffee was served and the servants had gone, Mrs. Sherwood

took up her bunch of yellow roses and watched Katharine over it for awhile. She was embarrassed; how should she begin to strike?

"I have arranged a lovely plan for your coming-out party, my dear," she said, "and I was thinking to-day that when we give a dinner in honor of your engagement to Mr. Percival that I shall have the centre of the table banked with moss and filled with growing ferns—"

Katharine put down her cup.

"I shall never be engaged to Mr. Percival—"

"He will ask you again."

"I shall not give him the chance."

"My dear," said Mrs. Sherwood, "you must;—you must—"

Katharine raised her head proudly.

"Aunt," she said, "I will do anything reasonable to please you,—but I will never marry Mr. Percival."

"Suppose that Mr. Percival alone could save your uncle from ruin,—suppose he held notes of your uncle,—suppose that these notes were over-due,—suppose that Mr. Percival could at a month's notice turn your uncle and myself into the street—banish us from all this beauty and luxury."

Katharine opened her eyes as one intent. She looked at the exquisitely chased silver coffee-cups and at the flowers and rich screen behind her aunt's chair.

"It is impossible!"

"No. Mr. Percival can do all these things, unless you make it impossible."

"He is a monster to threaten you!" cried Katharine.

"He has not threatened, but he can take his rights."

Mrs. Sherwood went over to Katharine and brushed her cheek with her lips.

"Will you save us?"

"I can't, aunt,—I can't!—anything but that. Surely, you do not want to make me wretched for life? You don't know what a vital thing religion is —it means trouble all my life for me, if I consent."

"I am not quite a heathen," said Mrs. Sherwood, curling her lip.

"But you are not a Catholic."

Mrs. Sherwood bit her lip; she could hardly restrain herself from shaking Katharine.

"You must save your uncle or not. For me," said Mrs. Sherwood, "I know you have little regard."

Katharine rose, disengaging herself from Mrs. Sherwood's hand which had rested on her shoulder, and went to the long window, filled with the dusk. She did not doubt her aunt's word; she was not accustomed to doubt.

"I met Mr. Percival to-day, and asked him to dinner for to-morrow night. He will speak to you again."

A sudden light filled Katharine's face; she turned to her aunt,—

"I will save you if I can."

"Oh, you sweet girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Sherwood, kissing her. "You shall have a trousseau from Paris that will amaze these upstarts!"

"But uncle cannot afford it,—you said—" began Katharine.

"If you save us he can," said Mrs. Sherwood, "but do not humiliate your uncle by telling him what I have said. He would *die* if he knew I had appealed to you."

"I will do my best—I will do my best," said Katharine, hastily turning away. "I could not be ungrateful."

"I believe you," answered her aunt. "I have a box for the opera—go, dress, and we shall be in time for the third act of 'Lohengrin.' Hurry!"

Katharine looked pleased. Music was delightful to her at all times; she ran up to her room.

Mrs. Sherwood laughed as she put a soft wrap over her yellow silk.

"I knew that this chance of being a heroine would overcome her religious scruples and sentimental nonsense. What a fool she is! It did not need much diplomacy to overcome her. And now for the opera!"

Katharine came down, looking neither a heroine nor a martyr, covered with a fur cloak, and with the score of the opera in her hand. "I have conquered," Mrs. Sherwood said to herself.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Warning.

IT would be difficult to describe the pleasure with which Mrs. Sherwood enjoyed the opera. She disliked Wagner's music, but the knowledge that she had gained a victory gave her a serenity and a cheerfulness that made even the German composer's choruses things of joy. Katharine was disposed of, and disposed of to the most desirable man in the town. She had done more at one stroke than half the manœuvring mothers could have accomplished during a whole season's campaign. Well might she rest in her well-cushioned chair in the Academy of Music and reflect on her laurels. Katharine *might* have made a better match, she reflected; but that could only have been done abroad, and there was no knowing whether a girl like Katharine would go well in the European market, even if backed by Mr. Sherwood's millions. Mrs. Sherwood looked at Katharine as she leaned over the edge of the box, with her flushed cheek resting on her hand, and wondered what people saw in her.

"Convent education can't be such a failure, after all," she said to herself. "The idea of sane people

admiring those simple German songs she sings—it's quite too foolish!"

Well, it was time to be complacent. Her niece would be Mrs. Wirt Percival, and her position in the best set would be fixed. Even that horrid Mrs. Percival, or that atrocious Mrs. Vavasour could not injure it. But, unhappily for her, Mrs. Sherwood's standard of judgment was utterly worldly, and she could not imagine the existence of any standard except her own. Had she been a little more unworldly, she would have understood Katharine better. She saw visions of social success in England before her. She would take a house in London, and there would be telegrams in all the American papers in which her presentation at court by the wife of the American minister would be elaborately chronicled. The curtain went down on the act, and Katharine turned to her aunt, awakening suddenly from the spell of the music. There was a knock at the door of the box, and Wirt Percival, in an ill-fitting suit of clothes made by an English tailor, came in, accompanied by a tall, slim young man with white eyelashes, and an eyeglass held in his right eye without apparent muscular exertion.

"Let me present Lord Marchmont," Wirt Percival said. "He is most anxious to meet you, Mrs. Sherwood. Lord Marchmont—Miss O'Conor."

Mrs. Sherwood made a stiff inclination. Katharine rose and made her courtesy, after the manner of her school, which was very quaint and graceful.

Lord Marchmont actually took out his eyeglass in order to see her better.

"Lovely girl, Percival," Mrs. Sherwood heard him murmur. She was very gracious to Wirt Percival, who sat down near her, while Lord Marchmont did not conceal his admiration for Katharine.

"Who is he?" Mrs. Sherwood asked, in a whisper.

"Who? Marchmont? Oh, he's the son of the Earl of Bassford—knew him in London; he comes over to marry a rich American, like the rest of 'em," said Wirt, with a laugh. "He's not much to look at, is he?"

Mrs. Sherwood mused. What a pity that she had not another niece to whom Mr. Sherwood would be generous! Fancy the dizzy happiness—the delirium of delight—of being aunt to Lady Marchmont! Wirt Percival was well enough, but the son of an earl was so much better. Mrs. Sherwood did not consider the character of the man at all; he was an earl's son, that was enough. She tapped him on the shoulder with her fan, interrupting his talk with Katharine, and asked him to dinner.

The curtain rose, and the music began.

"Hush!" Katharine said.

Lord Marchmont was politely silent, though the people in the opposite box chattered with all their might. He watched Katharine's changing color. There was sincerity, he admitted; there was unconsciousness. The young women in the opposite box

were very sparkling and artificial. It did not require an opera-glass to see that their eyes were as heavily "made up" with black pigment as those of the singers on the stage, and their cheeks were heavily rouged. Lord Marchmont wondered why these fashionable Americans adopted the nastiest of the latest English fashions, when they could gain so much by being simple and unconscious. He looked with distaste on the heavy *rouge* plastered on Mrs. Sherwood's cheeks, and observed with pleasure the natural color of Katharine's.

Mrs. Sherwood was thinking how foolish Katharine was not to *rouge* a little;—she compared her disapprovingly with the chattering and brilliantly-colored group in the opposite box. Mrs. Percival gave her a cold nod from the parquette. She considered boxes vulgar, and said to Mr. Percival that only "new people" were so ostentatious. The sight of Katharine filled her with irritation. She liked the girl. In her heart she did not want her to marry a non-Catholic; but she hated the thought that anybody should hold the favor of entering her family so lightly. She would have preferred to see Wirt marry the Lady Alicia; but, after all, Katharine was so simple, so natural, and so kind that she had a feeling she ought to belong to the Percivals.

After the opera, Lord Marchmont was polite enough to pay some attention to Mrs. Sherwood, and this gave Wirt Percival a chance to speak to Katharine. He adjusted her wrap, and she took

his arm on their way through the *foyer* to the carriage.

"I hope you will give me a chance of renewing our talk at the cotillon, Miss O'Conor. I did not take your answer as final, you know. If you will give me a chance after your aunt's dinner-party, I shall—"

They had made their way through the smiling, talking crowd, and they now stood in the vestibule, almost alone, for Wirt had walked more quickly than the rest.

"I *do* want to talk to you, Mr. Percival," Katharine said, eagerly, "but there is no time here."

Wirt's face lighted: she had reconsidered her determination, then. She certainly would make a creditable hostess at Bolingbroke. Even at this moment he sighed—"if her name was only the Lady Alicia!" But, after all, he reflected, a man could not have everything.

"Your niece is the loveliest girl I have seen in America," said Lord Marchmont, enthusiastically. "I am glad you have asked me to dine with you. It's a great privilege to meet a girl like that. We have a great many American girls in London,—Lady Randolph Churchill is an American, you know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Sherwood, stifling the title, "My Lord," on her lips. She wished she could cry out aloud to the assembled multitude, "This is Lord Marchmont!" It might be vulgar, but it would be

so satisfactory. If she could only see one of those newspaper people in the crowd, she might have the supreme fact that she was attended by a real, live lord worked into the newspapers; but no professional scribe was in sight.

"We are marrying Americans greatly on the other side just now; it's quite the thing. Some of the smartest women in London are Americans, I assure you."

"Dear me, Lord Marchmont," said the Lady Alicia, coming up and catching the words, "you say that just as if you were talking of the importation of the American hog."

"It's a matter of business," muttered young Dillon, who was with her.

"A matter of reason," she corrected. "Americans when they become rich find their own country so frightfully dull that they like to live abroad; and it pays a girl to marry a title, and a good one. She can go into dinner before anybody else, if it is a remarkably good one," added Lady Alicia, with a laugh. "You, my dear friend, couldn't marry *me*," she said, with a touch of malice, "though I am sure you would prefer to marry in your own caste. I'm poor, you know."

Lord Marchmont looked uncomfortable, Mrs. Sherwood wondered at the Lady Alicia's frankness, and Mrs. Vavasour, who was standing in a corner waiting for a cab, cried out:

"Dear me, if these broken-down English continue to swarm into Philadelphia, there will be no living here."

As Mrs. Vavasour had great carrying power in her voice, there was an uncomfortable silence. When Katharine and Mrs. Sherwood had been helped into their carriage, Wirt and Lord Marchmont stood for a moment on the sidewalk, and Mrs. Sherwood heard the Englishman ask:

"Who did you say that girl was?"

"Miss O'Conor."

"I am deucedly obliged for the introduction, old man. She's the sort of girl I admire. Rich?"

The carriage drove off, and a new idea took possession of Mrs. Sherwood. Why should not Katharine marry Lord Marchmont? This would be a better match than the Percival one. To be sure, she had heard discreditable stories about the young Englishman,—he was poor, a fortune-hunter. But Mr. Sherwood could be induced to make a good settlement on Katharine if she should marry a lord, "and then think of the delight of alluding to my niece, Lady Marchmont!" It would be pleasant, too, to leave Kenwood and live in England. The Percivals were well enough if one stayed in Philadelphia; but if one wanted a broader horizon, Lord Marchmont was the man. Mrs. Sherwood opened the campaign at once.

"I don't think Wirt Percival is as handsome as Lord Marchmont; the Englishman is very pleasant, —much more manner than Percival."

"I did not notice," said Katharine, in whose head the music was murmuring still. "I fancy it would be very hard for you to give up the opera and all the other luxuries, aunt."

"Of course it would," said Mrs. Sherwood, sharply. "What are you thinking of, child? Who's talking of giving up luxuries?"

"You know you said that uncle was involved—"

"So I did; but I said that you might save him by—by—by making a good marriage."

Mrs. Sherwood was vexed; she was a diplomat foiled; she had told her lie somewhat too prematurely. Suppose that foolish, headstrong, sentimental girl should persist in marrying Wirt Percival when Lord Marchmont might be caught, she groaned softly.

"Do you know, Katharine," she said, "I fancy Wirt admires Lady Alicia."

"Does he?" said Katharine, with a little laugh. "If he does, I wish he would tell her so and let me alone!"

What a strange girl! Who could understand her? She was willing apparently to marry Percival to save her uncle, and yet glad to throw him over to the Lady Alicia and let her uncle go to ruin.

"But you'll marry Wirt, of course, if he asks you," said the diplomatist, forgetting her plots in her curiosity.

Katharine raised her head proudly.

"I will never marry anybody who is not one with me in religion," she said firmly.

"Not to save your uncle?"

"I shall not need to marry Wirt Percival to save my uncle. I have another plan. I know that, in his heart, he would rather marry Biddy."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Sherwood. "A plan? What plan can a girl like you have?"

"We shall see," answered Katharine, smiling behind her fan.

There was a crush of carriages in front of the Broad-street station. Mrs. Sherwood's made its way to the curbstone and stopped, for the theatre train to Kenwood was almost due. Mrs. Sherwood was too busy with her wraps to answer. Suddenly the door of the carriage was opened and a woman's voice said:

"Miss O'Conor?"

"Yes," answered Katharine, impulsively.

A note was thrust into her hand.

The door closed. Katharine caught a glimpse of a woman's face. Where had she seen it before?

"You will show me that note when we reach the train," Mrs. Sherwood said, severely.

"Certainly," answered Katharine, "why not?"

She opened it—it was merely a folded paper, and read:

"You can help one who has suffered, and save yourself from future misery by coming to see Jane Mavrick at any time on Sunday or in the evening."

There followed an address which Katharine hastily memorized.

When they reached the well-lighted car, Mrs. Sherwood asked for the note. She frowned, and tore it up.

"Absolutely," she said, "the lower class are becoming too insolent. I suppose this is some disreputable relation of yours."

Katharine flushed, but said nothing. She had the address safe in her memory, and she determined to put the case in her uncle's hands.

What a sad world it was. Music, roses, glitter, rank, fashion—and death and misery lurking behind them! What would life be, if there were no benignant Mother waiting to show, at the end of the vale of tears, the Blessed Vision of her Son. Katharine said her Rosary with a new fervor; it was her anchor, her hope.

CHAPTER XV.

Frankness.

MRS. SHERWOOD'S dinner party consisted of Wirt Percival, the Lady Alicia, Ferdinand Carey, Katharine, and Lord Marchmont. She had forgotten all about Katharine's note in her interest in her new plan. Of course, she would have Lord Marchmont take her in to dinner. Percival would play host and take in the Lady Alicia, and Katharine and Ferdinand Carey would be together —a harmless combination. She could easily draw the young Englishman into talk about himself, tell stories of Mr. Sherwood's wealth, and prepare the way for a proposal to Katharine. In the meantime, the Lady Alicia might make up with Wirt, who, Mrs. Sherwood confidently believed, did not know his own mind. Katharine O'Conor must be Lady Marchmont, if the two were separated on the day after their marriage. She had set her heart on this, and she would have it so.

Katharine went down to the drawing-room with a heavy heart. There seemed to be some impending danger. She was somewhat cheered by the soft light and warmth of the room, which, for this occasion,

had been made a nest of roses of Mrs. Sherwood's favorite yellow. Katharine was very simply dressed in some soft material, chosen by her aunt, with silver threads drawn through it. She was a contrast to the Lady Alicia, whose amber silk gown and heavy amber ornaments lacked the gracefulness of Katharine's dress. Lord Marchmont noted the difference at once, and the Lady Alicia felt it.

Katharine was the last to come in. Mrs. Sherwood gave her scrutinizing glance and frowned. Katharine had not put on the pearl necklace she had lent her, and she had neither fan nor nosegay—though her aunt had sent both to her room. Katharine had a dislike to the encumbering of her hands with trifles of that kind.

"How *do* you manage it?" said Lady Alicia, when she had kissed her. "You have the simplest gown on, and yet you contrive to make me feel overdressed, though, I assure you, Kate Reilly made this frock."

"It *is* beautiful," said Katharine, sincerely. "I must tell the truth,—I put this dress together myself. I did not like it when it came home."

"Goodness gracious! no wonder your aunt is frowning," said Biddy, laughing. "I don't know how it is,—you Americans can wear anything gracefully. I see Lord Marchmont's here," continued the quiet girl, taking a serious tone. "He could not be invited to a decent house in Dublin; he looks harmless enough, but he has been dropped from his clubs

everywhere, and there are a hundred unpleasant stories about him. And yet you people make much of him! I really can't understand why a title should make you all wild,—and some of you are nice enough to do without it."

Katharine looked at Lord Marchmont and pitied him. She could hardly believe that so young a man could have done anything very bad; he looked gay and bright, too, though he had an air of dissipation.

"Don't cultivate a desire to convert him," whispered her friend, "and I advise you to have as little to do with him as possible. He is a fortune-hunter."

At this moment, Mr. Sherwood's butler announced that dinner was served. Katharine took Ferdinand Carey's arm, and the dinner began. The girl, looking at the six people around the rose and fern covered table—for the flowers left very little of the table cloth exposed—could not realize that their thoughts were not as cheerful and innocent as hers. Everybody seemed happy; she did not know that one of the indispensable requirements of a social education is that everybody should seem free from care when the dinner lights are lit and the roses strewn. Ferdinand Carey spoke little at first, but the Lady Alicia and Percival made up for his silence, with the assistance of Lord Marchmont. They jabbered about people in London, until Mrs. Sherwood grew so delighted that she made the butler bring out some of her husband's Madeira,—a wine which did not usually appear. She was almost happy; she had

found her place at last. How times had changed since she had stood behind her father's counter in days gone by! Who could have predicted that she would have sat at her own table, faultless in every particular, and heard a peer's son and an Irish earl's daughter include her in their conversation, as if she knew Lady de Gray and all the other smart people in London. Not long ago she had carried her own market basket home, with the celery and the fowl's legs sticking out, and she had been rather proud of it,—for her fowl and her celery were the best to be had in Second Street market. Then she had thought respectfully of such people as the Percivals,—not only respectfully, but with awe. But here she was manœuvring to reject young Wirt Percival, that her niece might marry Lord Marchmont, who knew the Prince of Wales and who had a hundred familiar anecdotes about lords and ladies of every degree! Surely the Sherwoods had gone up in the world,—but how glad she was that her husband was not at home to spoil her plans!

She looked at Katharine very kindly now, in spite of the changes which that young woman had seen fit to make in her dress. She felt thankful that a convent education had reduced her niece to such docility. After all, she thought, there must be something in an education which makes a girl not only attractive to well-bred people, but keeps her so plastic that she can be moved about like a pawn on a chess-board. How lovely it was to be able to use this young life

to further her own social advancement, Mrs. Sherwood thought. It was natural that a woman of her kind should entirely misunderstand a woman whose standards were such as Katharine's,—standards of the most exact truth. "Truth" had been the watchword of Mother Ursula; it was Katharine's. Moreover, Katharine had been taught to believe that there was much good in human nature; Mrs. Sherwood distrusted its existence.

It was arranged that coffee should be served in the little conservatory, for Mrs. Sherwood was very proud of her palms, which had been arranged in thick groups about a choice collection of orchids.

"The funniest thing happened in London one night at a dinner," said Lord Marchmont, when the group had made itself comfortable and picturesque in the softly-lighted conservatory. "An American was declaiming against the extravagance of the English aristocracy, and he wound up his list of horrors by saying, 'and these people actually eat orchids at five hundred dollars apiece!'"

Everybody, except Katharine, laughed.

"I suppose the fellow meant artichokes," said Wirt.

"He meant what he said," returned Lord Marchmont. "Americans are so frightfully ignorant of things of that kind."

Katharine, who had stood up to examine a magnificent purple and gold orchid, for which her uncle had paid a fabulous sum, turned hastily—

"Don't you think that you are too hard on Americans?" she asked, smiling. "Or is it that you expect every American you meet to be a scholar and gentleman, and when they prove otherwise you are disappointed."

Lord Marchmont did not answer. Ferdinand Carey laughed. What would this girl say next? It was refreshing to find one woman who was not an Anglomaniac. She had spoken very gently, but she evidently waited for an answer.

"Oh, you know," said Lord Marchmont, after a pause, during which even the Lady Alicia declined to help him, "Americans are Americans, don't you know—and not quite up in civilization—that is, *new*, you know—"

Katharine looked at him intently, and she made a striking picture in her white gown, with a background of palms; she was interested, and therefore not at all timid.

"I never heard that we were not civilized, and I think you are mistaken. Mother Ursula—"

"Always Mother Ursula," murmured Mrs. Sherwood, with a sneer.

"—always said that Americans, when they are cultivated, have more tact and taste than any other people in the world."

"But so few are cultivated," said the Lady Alicia. "I assure you one seldom sees an American at the castle, though they tell me there are crowds of second-rate ones at the Lord Mayor's."

"*You* ought to stand up for Americans, Biddy," said Katharine, reproachfully, "when you remember all that America has done for Ireland."

"Done for Ireland!" cried the Lady Alicia, indignantly. "I don't know what America has done for Ireland, except to keep up the Land League and to help the tenants steal our rents."

"America has given many of you a refuge—many of *us*, I may say," said Katharine, "for my father took advantage of it. If I were not half an Irish girl, it might seem vulgar for me to remind you of the gratitude the Irish owe America. As it is, I think I may say that whenever Ireland needed help, America opened her hands most generously."

The Lady Alicia fanned herself violently.

"Americans are generally upstarts," she said; "and in Dublin we consider that people who leave Ireland for America are either paupers or queer."

Katharine turned to her flowers. For a moment Ferdinand Carey wished that Mrs. Vavasour was present; she would doubtless have spiked the Lady Alicia's guns with a glance which would have put that noblewoman at once among the "queer."

"I am glad to be the daughter of a man whom your Dublin people call a 'pauper' or 'queer.' I am happy to be called an American," said Katharine.

"Oh, your father was a gentleman," began Biddy. "He was my mother's—"

Mrs. Sherwood interrupted; she disapproved of this conversation. It put Lord Marchmont in an

unpleasant position, and it would probably drive him away from Katharine.

Katharine walked slowly to a large, deep window, separated from the rest of the conservatory by a thick screen of fern palms. Much to her vexation, Mrs. Sherwood saw Wirt Percival follow her. She could hear the murmur of their voices, but she could not leave Lord Marchmont, who was explaining to her the etiquette of an English house party. Carey and Lady Alicia were looking at the orchids and filling and refilling their little golden cups with coffee many times,—for they were both lovers of this Arabian beverage. If Mrs. Sherwood could have heard what was said behind the palms, she would have left Lord Marchmont to finish his talk in monologue.

"You were not in earnest the other night when you refused to marry me," Wirt Percival said. "Or, rather, perhaps you thought I was not in earnest enough. The moment I heard you sing I knew you were the one woman I loved."

"I am anxious to talk to you," said Katharine, with a frankness that amazed him. "But not about that. Love founded on a song will cease with the song. If I should lose my voice, what kind of a husband would you make? No. No. No. If I should marry a man outside of the Church, I should be wretched and make him wretched. For my sake —for my soul's sake—I could not marry you, even," Katharine added, with a smile, "if I had fallen in love with your singing."

Katharine wondered at her own ease in saying these things; where was the timidity of her first entrance into society now? She felt that she ought to say what she meant as well as she could.

"You are too scrupulous,—people keep religion in the background nowadays. I'm sure half the people in town don't know whether my aunt goes to the Cathedral or to Trinity. I know that you are too sensible to believe that I am dying for love of you,—but I *do* like you better than any girl I have ever seen,—and I am sure that, if we were engaged, we might learn to love each other as devoutly as—as—as anybody."

Wirt was frank in his turn, and much in earnest.

"I should have no objection to going to church with you, at High Mass; you know, six o'clock wouldn't suit me at all. And in time—who knows? —I might learn to believe myself. But at present I can't except any form of Christianity. We could both be tolerant. Reason can make everything right."

"Not that which is unreasonable," said Katharine.

The moonlight came in through the window, sublimating Katharine's profile and color, and intensifying the purity of her expression. Percival admired her more and more; he was not in love, but he felt that he might be. He had an uneasy idea that Mrs. Sherwood wanted to get rid of him in favor of Lord Marchmont, and he knew that the latter had begun to think of Katharine. The color

rose to his cheeks as he thought of such a sacrifice, for he knew Marchmont's reputation as a worthless, idle, and corrupt creature.

"Let us be engaged," he said, taking Katharine's hand. She drew it away.

"No," she answered.

"I will do anything you ask,—anything; I will even go through your Catholic forms."

"It would only be going through 'forms,'" she said, with a sigh. "Religion is vital; it is more than 'forms.' There is one object to gain which I might become your wife if I did not value my Faith and freedom more than life, and that I can gain without what would mean misery to us both."

He raised his hand as if in protest.

"Yes, misery," she repeated. "I have thought often with a shudder of the horror of being an essential part of a life which knew not my God—my Lord."

Percival looked at her with a new sense of respect. perhaps there were things in life which meant more than mere living and enjoying from day to day.

"I could like you," she continued, "you are honest and worthy of trust."

He made a slight bow.

"And you like me because other people seem to like me."

"Because," he said, with another bow, "you are the most distinguished woman I have ever met."

They both laughed.

"I am a poor Romeo," he said. "This is not the way they make love in novels—though we have the palms and the moonlight."

"We are friends, not lovers. May I ask you to save my uncle?" she asked, hearing a rustle, and anxious to gain her object.

Percival stared at her.

"Save your uncle! Do you mean Mr. Sherwood? Save him?"

"He is in your power,—he has lost everything,—he will be a ruined man unless you arrange matters; you know what I mean. Oh, do help him!"

Katharine looked at him imploringly.

"I don't understand," he said, "I really don't. But I will do what I can—I am astonished—"

"Katharine!"

It was Mrs. Sherwood's voice. As a chaperon with a conscience, she felt herself obliged to interfere. Katharine looked at Percival, asking a question with her eyes. He nodded. "Thank you," she said, as Mrs. Sherwood parted the palm branches.

Katharine drew her bewildered aunt towards her and whispered:

"Oh, aunt, I am so happy!"

"You haven't accepted him?" Mrs. Sherwood cried, frowning.

"Oh, no," exclaimed Katharine, radiantly, "but he has promised to help uncle."

Mrs. Sherwood stood as one transfixed; Katharine left her, before she could speak, to join Biddy. Per-

cival had left the window. Mrs. Sherwood went behind the palm-screen and stood in the moonlight composing her nerves. What did that idiot of a girl mean? A horrible suspicion crept into her mind. It was confirmed in a few minutes.

"You've been monopolizing that O'Conor girl," she heard Lord Marchmont's voice saying. "You ought to have given me a chance,—her aunt says she will be a millionaire,—and she's *chic*."

"I may as well kill your hopes at once, Marchmont," answered Percival, dryly. "I have later news; she has just told me that her uncle is a beggar. We go fast in America."

"Oh," said Lord Marchmont, "thank you,—that lets me out."

Mrs. Sherwood clasped her hands; then, in the most unladylike manner, she shook her fist at an invisible person.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Mystery.

LORD MARCHMONT did not linger long in Philadelphia; he went off to New York in search of an heiress, and Mrs. Sherwood saw his card, with "P. P. C." on it in genuine grief. It was impossible for her to scold Katharine for telling Wirt Percival what she believed to be the truth. Her next anxiety was to prevent the lie from spreading further. Mrs. Sherwood knew by experience that, when a lie starts, no earthly creature can tell where it will cease its peregrinations or what new forms it will take.

Katharine had defeated her, not by intrigue, but by simplicity. She acknowledged it—Wirt Percival had been rejected, and Lord Marchmont frightened off. She said to herself that if she could only command some good introductions in England, she would shake the dust of Philadelphia from her feet and try to settle Katharine there. She reflected that no doubt there were certain young Catholic baronets, perhaps even peers, in want of money, who might be induced to propose to Katharine. She had heard that Lord Beaumont was a Catholic, but she had

also heard that he was married. She shut her lips tightly and made a vow that, since Katharine would not make a marriage of reason with her eyes open, she must be deluded into one. Since she had entertained a live Lord—though his title was only such by courtesy—she despised all the Wirt Percivals, the Ferdinand Careys, the Rittenhouses, and all the personages of her own city. She knew that Lord Marchmont would not return—for in a few days after his departure the newspapers announced that he had led two cotillons with Miss Van Golden, of New York, and that he had very nearly completed his Text-book of American Slang, for which the young Lord had a natural liking.

Mrs. Sherwood cursed fate. She was a child of the world, and had no consolation on this earth, except what fashion and her kind of social life gave her. She had gained the desire of her life; she was in "society;" but she now hungered more than ever for higher fruit beyond. Much of this society was merely an imitation of the English; now she wanted the real thing. She did not know of the quiet, cultivated, kindly people which made the really "best" society of her native city outside this whirl; she did not know of them, for their names never appeared in the newspapers. And if she had met them, she would have cared as little for them as they for her.

She must appear at the Assembly with Katharine and the Lady Alicia; she must bind the Lady Alicia

to her with "hooks of steel," for in her she saw a possible means by which high-class English invitations could be obtained. For several days after her dinner-party Mrs. Sherwood gave herself up to "diplomatizing." If she had put the same ability to good account, she could have founded an orphan asylum and settled every detail of its management, but she frittered it away in a hundred plots for giving herself and Mr. Sherwood a mere temporary social importance.

Katharine, in the meantime, had prayed a great deal and thought a great deal. Every morning she slipped out to Mass. She looked forward with great pleasure to the return of her uncle. She could now show how grateful she was to him. When Herr Teufelfisch came to practice with her, she asked him a hundred questions about the possibilities of teaching. He answered them briefly; but ended by saying:

"Ach, teaching music is the life of a dog—you should sing in concert when you must earn your living."

Katharine cherished this piece of ungraciously given advice. She imagined herself putting roll after roll of bank notes into her uncle's hand. How delightful it would be! There would be no more tiresome talks and teas, no more long, ceremonious dinners. There would be a little house just outside the city, quiet and pretty, an early dinner, for which she would gather flowers and make the pudding,

and, after that, Katharine would kiss her uncle and her aunt—but she was doubtful about this—and rush off to sing at a concert, returning with the usual roll of bank notes. She made up her mind that there should be always silver candlesticks on the table at dinner; she was rather uncertain about other details. At this time she was as blithe as a bird; it was a great relief for her to know that she might work, instead of marry. Marriage was away—far in the distance—and she longed earnestly for work. She wanted to do her best in the world, not to have things done for her. She carried the note from Jane Mavrick in her pocket, and many times tried to recall the face of the woman who had given it to her. She knew that it would be useless to speak of that episode to her aunt; she must wait until her uncle should return. As she made out from a map of the city, the address would lead her far uptown. She did not know the city, and she was acquainted with nobody who could guide her. But she could wait, and she reflected that there might be more harm done by her wandering about the city in search of unknown persons than by refusing to act until her uncle should advise her.

She had one trial of freedom, and she enjoyed it thoroughly. And she needed some enjoyment to make up for the fall of her castle in Spain. Mrs. Sherwood informed her one day, just as she had settled several important details in her life as a concert singer, that the affairs of Mr. Sherwood had miracu-

lously improved,—there was no need now for Mr. Wirt Percival's assistance.

"Oh, dear!" said Katharine, "I am so sorry—I thought—" and then, brought to her senses by the disapproving look on her aunt's face, she added, "It is fortunate."

But, nevertheless, she regretted with all her heart the disappearance of the visions of independence and of the details of a cottage life, including the silver candlesticks. Mrs. Sherwood was anxious that any rumor of her husband's insolvency should be contradicted. She was not sure that Wirt Percival would not mention it to his aunt. In that case, Mrs. Vavasour would soon gain possession of the precious morsel. To counteract such gossip she announced in the papers—she had of late become very polite to the "society" reporters—that her dinner and cotillon for Katharine would be a thing of unusual splendor.

"Dear me!" she said, as she unfolded the papers, "how these writing people *do* get hold of things. There is really no privacy nowadays. Listen to this"—and Mrs. Sherwood read aloud:

"Mrs. Sherwood's dinner and cotillon, to introduce her niece socially, will be the smartest event of the season. The fashionable folk are leaving Lenox, Tuxedo, and their country-houses to be in season for this event. Miss Katharine O'Conor, cousin of the Lady Alicia St. John, daughter of the Earl of Bolingbroke, is one of the beauties of the season.

Their favors for the cotillon, imported from Paris, will consist of silver roses, silver scarf-pins, and examples of Neapolitan filagree work."

"I must really write and ask that this thing be stopped," continued Mrs. Sherwood, watching Katharine over the paper. "It's vulgar.—How stupid they are!" she answered with genuine feeling. "This fellow has actually said that I am to have the Marine Band from Washington, when I wrote distinctly that it would be the Mandolin Orchestra—" She paused, and colored slightly; Katharine discreetly examined the tracery on her plate, and her aunt congratulated herself that her involuntary revelation had been unheard. Katharine, however, did not need enlightenment; she had seen this same paragraph on Mrs. Sherwood's desk when that lady had sent her upstairs for her smelling-salts the day before, and it was in her aunt's handwriting.

Mrs. Sherwood had to consider the matter of this great function carefully. The invitations alone would give her many days of anxiety. She determined to "cut" relentlessly everybody who was not willing to be presented to Mrs. Percival,—no matter what their claims were. She would give something later, she resolved, to those second-rate people. She was terribly anxious to secure the Percivals, and she knew that it could only be done through Katharine's influence. She had no fear of filling her rooms. She knew well that society would be glad to ask for invitations, after the announcement that Wirt Per-

cival and Lord Marchmont had dined at her house, and that the Lady Alicia was a relative of Katharine. But if society came, and found that Mrs. Percival and one or two other women of her set were absent, it would be a tremendous blow at her prestige.

"I wish you would go into town this afternoon," she said to Katharine. "I am busy, and I hear that Mr. Percival is not well. It would be nice to call and ask about him; he seems to like you. You can be driven down to the station, and then take a hansom from Broad street."

"Oh, may I?" said Katharine; "I should like it. I am sure I can easily find the Percival house."

"Of course,—and you might take six of the Baronne de Rothschild roses—*six*, mind—six is all I can spare. You ought to wear your black tailor-made gown as a background to the flowers—and don't run as if you were mad."

Katharine had bounced up from the table.

"Thank you, aunt."

"You may go at once, if you like. I suppose Herr Teufelfisch does not come to-day."

"No."

Katharine copied several letters for her aunt, and, fortified by a cup of coffee and a roll, went to the station.

It was true that her dreams had been shattered by her aunt's contradiction of her previous story of her uncle's property. There would be no congenial

work for her now, no pleasant sense of repaying her uncle for his kindness; but, after all, who can remember a vanished castle in Spain on a clear day, with the sun shining, a novel journey before one, and a bunch of the biggest roses ever seen sending up their perfume? Katharine certainly looked very happy. She reached the Broad Street station in the serenest possible state of mind. She examined and admired the interior of that ideal station, sat in an unoccupied seat, and watched the grate fire with the air of a waiting traveller. The bustle around her delighted her. Here passed a young girl, with an alligator-skin bag and a little brother, just aroused to the fact that her train was about to start. There were three school-girls, with large portmanteaux, a mandolin, and a big box of candy, evidently late pupils for a boarding school. Near her was an old lady, neatly but poorly dressed, who wiped her eyes from time to time, and sat watching the clock. Katharine looked at her, and longed to ask her if she could be of use. But a certain shyness and delicacy prevented this. She saw a shining tear fall on the rusty black of the old lady's dress. She started up from her seat and stood in front of the fire irresolutely. What was the matter? Perhaps this old lady was on her way to the bedside of a dying son? Perhaps she had just left a grave, and perhaps she was alone in the world. Katharine stood still with her magnificent roses clasped in her hands, wishing that she might ask a question of the

sorrowful woman. But she had not the courage to intrude on a grief that seemed so sacred. She turned to go, with her eyes fixed on the white, wrinkled, but gentle face under the black bonnet. Then she remembered her roses. Surely there had never been seen such great and vivid roses as those in her hand, half-buried in green, polished leaves. Doubtless Mrs. Sherwood had intended that they should bring out exclamations of wonder from Mrs. Percival, and perhaps excite some envy. Of a dark pink, with close-set petals, each shaped like the shell of a heart, with glimpse of powdery gold centres and hints of richer red, they were indeed sumptuous. People stared as they passed at the slender girl, who seemed but a stem for a bright flower-face and this incomparable bunch of roses. The Baronne de Rothschild is not as exquisite as the tea-rose or the Marechale Niel; sometimes, when full-blown, it, like the Jacqueminot, has an air of over-richness which seems vulgar. But these special roses were even sweeter than the American Beauties, and without that faded look that sometimes marks those fine flowers. Katharine's roses were as vivid as a flash of pink flame, and their scent seemed to envelope her as in a cloud.

She chose the largest of the roses, and walking to the old lady, dropped it in her lap as she passed. For an instant the tears were dried,—the weak blue eyes caught the look of interest on Katharine's face, and then the shriveled hands caught up the great

rose, and the lonely woman kissed it. Katharine went away, feeling that a blessing rested on her.

She had no thought of taking a hansom. Could she not walk? And were there not policemen to direct her? She went slowly along her dear, delightful Chestnut Street. Was there any other street in all the world so beautiful? Biddy boasted of Sackville Street, and said there was no place under Heaven like Dublin during the great horse-show. And Mr. Percival had praised Euclid Avenue, in Cleveland. And Lord Marchmont had said that the Strand was his ideal of a city place. And Mrs. Percival had declared for Fifth Avenue on Sunday at mid-day. Wirt Percival had mentioned with approval some Paris street, with its chairs and tables on the asphalt in the moonlight; but Katharine said to herself that there could be no street in any city so pleasant as Chestnut Street on a clear morning.

At Thirteenth Street, a church caught her eye. It was St. John's. She turned up to it, and went in, as a matter of course. Katharine could always pray best when she was happy. She knelt in the incense-scented gloom and said her beads. Outside sounded the rumble of carts on the cobble-stones and the jingle of bells. Inside there was peace. She went to the altar railing and laid her five roses on the carpet in front of the altar of our Lady.

When she had sufficiently enjoyed the novelty of the shop windows, she found her way to Walnut

Street, and, taking a car, rode to Mrs. Percival's house.

Mrs. Percival was having luncheon in her little study, as she called it; but she ordered that Katharine should come to her. This study was lined with books all bound in white vellum, on ebony shelves, which ran around the room, almost to the ceiling. A yellow-covered divan, a writing-table, on which the luncheon was placed, a tall orange tree and some palms made up the furniture of this room. Katharine declined everything but a cup of tea. Mrs. Percival seemed in a softened mood.

"Have you come to tell me that you have changed your mind about Wirt?" she asked.

"No, indeed," said Katharine, "I have come to ask after your husband. My aunt said he was ill."

"Your aunt!" repeated Mrs. Percival, with a curl of her lip. "Mr. Percival's temper is ill, and he has gone out for a walk. To tell you the truth, your aunt is the cause of a little quarrel we had a few minutes ago. She announces a big rout of some kind in the papers this morning and I told Mr. Percival *I* wouldn't go. He insisted that we ought to be there for your sake; so we disagreed, and he went out for a short walk; he's well enough for that now."

"Oh, don't bother about coming," said Katharine, earnestly. "I shall not mind, for those crowded affairs are very tiresome. I wish I were out of it myself; I'm sure it's much pleasanter to see you in

this nice, little room. Don't bother. There will be plenty of people there without you," added Katharine, cheerfully, "and my aunt will not mind after a minute or two."

Mrs. Percival gave Katharine a sharp glance. Did the girl mean to be impudent? This was an unusual way of disposing of a social magnate who was in the habit of making or unmaking the result of assemblies by her presence or absence.

Katharine was serenely unconscious, and Mrs. Percival saw it.

"I suppose you are right about Wirt. Mixed marriages are generally failures," she said with a sigh.

Katharine hastened to change the subject. Here was a chance to speak to a prudent women about the note she had received on the night of the opera. Mrs. Percival listened to her with attention. She took up a small handscreen, and shaded her face while Katharine spoke.

"Jane Mavrick!" she exclaimed. Where?—but let me see the note!"

Katharine gave it to her. She read it, with the screen still held between her and her visitor.

"Let me keep this, my dear," she said, in a low voice. "And pay no more attention to it; leave it to me; if the woman is in want, I will take care of her. Promise not to go near her,—promise," she said, anxiously. "Oh, I will go to your aunt's crush, if you will promise,—promise; I am afraid I am not well to-day!"

"Of course I will promise," answered Katharine, surprised by her excitement. "I am sure my aunt will be pleased—"

"I know—I will come,—tell her so! And now, my dear, have another cup of tea, and forget Jane Mavrick!"

Katharine could not forget so easily, with the remembrance of Mrs. Percival's excited manner before her. The talk drifted to many things; but the last word Mrs. Percival said was:

"Leave Jane Mavrick to me!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"But never doubt my love."—*Hamlet.*

MRS. SHERWOOD was charmed by Katharine's assurance that Mrs. Percival would not refuse her invitation. It was the pleasantest news she could have received. All she needed now was to induce Mrs. Percival to make a few calls with her on desirable people who ought to be invited, but whom she did not know. The affair must be a great success —the greatest success of the season, and Mrs. Sherwood looked fondly on Katharine, whose arts seemed to be effective.

"I believe the girl is a Jesuit in disguise," she said to herself, "I never thought she would bring that hateful Mrs. Percival around. I know she wants to snub me."

Mr. Percival came back from his walk in a good humor. He found his wife waiting for him in the dining-room. She saw by the brightness of his eyes and his improved color that his walk had done him good.

"Well, my dear," he said, "I hope you have regained your temper—or, rather, that you have regained control of it."

"Nonsense," she said; "*my* temper? Why, I have no temper. I have concluded to go to Mrs. Sherwood's rout—if she asks me. There! Isn't that a concession?"

"I am reasonably grateful. I am glad for Katharine O'Conor's sake. Do you know, I am more in love with that girl than ever!"

Mrs. Percival laughed, though there was a cloud of anxiety on her face.

"So am I."

"I wish something could be done for her," said Mr. Percival, gallantly standing until his wife had taken her place at the table, and then begging her to pin the flower he found on his napkin to his lapel.

"Your manners have improved," said his wife, smiling. "You did not learn these *petits soins* in Duluth,—though long ago you were certainly the best behaved man I knew."

"Well, I had a lesson to-day,—it was given unconsciously."

"But what do you mean by doing something for Katharine O'Conor? It seems to me that with Marcus Sherwood's money to back her, she doesn't need our assistance."

"Oh, money,—always money!" said Mr. Percival between the spoonfuls of his bisque of lobsters.

"You did not learn to talk of money that way in Duluth!" said Mrs. Percival, amused.

"I hate to think of Katharine's wasting her life in the Sherwood woman's atmosphere, with no duties

except the silly observances of little forms about eating or drinking or wearing clothes,—with a horizon bounded by a dance and a dinner. There's noble stuff in that girl."

"But socially—" began Mrs. Percival.

"Don't make me lose my temper again," growled Mr. Percival. "Don't. That sort of twaddle among people whose ancestors came here to make a living just like any other emigrants, although they were a few years ahead, makes me sick. It is only the aroma of this *bisque* that keeps me from swearing. What's the matter with Katharine socially?"

"I have found out who she is. Her people lived down town in some impossible street; her father was a clerk or something, and she has not a cent, except what her uncle gives her!"

"She's a gentlewoman and her people were gentlefolks, no matter where they lived. This question of drawing lines as to where people shall live is wretchedly provincial. I was brought up in a log cabin. We all washed our faces in one tin basin under the pump,—and there were ten of us. And there was just one small piece of rag carpet in the whole house. My mother's hands were as rough as —as a laborer's. She made the bread, she spun, she brewed, she washed—"

"Oh, stop these horrors!"

"And she would do so still, if she were alive,—and by Jove! I'd be proud of her and of her rough hands. Mine wouldn't be so smooth, if she hadn't

taught me more than any school could. Come, let's be honest; didn't your grandpapa sell second-hand—"

"This is awful," said Mrs. Percival, blushing. "The servants might hear."

"Well, we don't owe 'em anything,—and you may believe that they know more about our immediate ancestors than we ourselves do—more to their discredit. Keep up this aristocratic pretense to Mrs. Sherwood and her kind, if you like, my dear; but not to me. I don't like it, and I think even Philadelphia is growing beyond it. It is too transparent."

Mrs. Percival did not answer. She felt a little tired of life; after all, there were a great many shams in her life. She wondered if she might not be more influential for the good of Mr. Percival, if she were like Katharine, honest in all things.

"Katharine was here to-day," repeated Mrs. Percival, as Mr. Percival began to halve an orange. He had finished his dinner; she might now introduce a really disagreeable subject. "Wirt has the mitten,—she would not have him."

"Sorry—but he's not even a Christian in belief. The girl is right."

"And, oh, my dear,—*she's* in the city again;—and we thought she was dead,—Wirt said so."

"Do you mean—"

"I mean Jenny Mavrick's sister."

"Turned up again!" cried Mr. Percival, irritably. "Well, it's his own fault. Why doesn't he act like

a man? The women is his wife. He ought to acknowledge her openly before all the world. You don't believe in divorces, nor do I, nor does he, I imagine;—then why doesn't he face the music?"

"It would be social ruin," said Mrs. Percival; "the poor boy would have to isolate himself from everybody he knows. Nobody would call on his wife, and, consequently, he couldn't go out anywhere. It would be horrible!"

"No more horrible—not as horrible—as the present state of affairs. You might call on his wife."

"I!" exclaimed Mrs. Percival, looking in amazement across the table. "I! Why, the woman was a shop-girl or something like that. The poor boy made a mistake; he married hastily,—and he repents at leisure."

"But if your influence is worth anything, you ought to be able to avert the social ruin which would befall him here in Philadelphia if he acknowledges his wife."

"There are some things a woman can't do. I have never yet seen this woman. She is probably a shop-girl, with a superficial politeness, but a deep inward insolence,—presuming, without regard to the rules that govern social intercourse—an underbred creature. Of course I couldn't expect people to take a person like that up. Fancy everybody calling on an ex-shop-girl."

"And for this reason he lets his wife live apart from him, giving out to us that she is dead, and keeping her existence a secret from the world in general! And he calls himself a man!"

Mr. Percival arose from the table, and walked heavily up and down the floor.

"I cannot see," he said, standing in front of the grate, "why a woman of your common sense cannot see that this attempt to conserve all sorts of artificial distinctions here must make us all laughed at. If this woman is vicious or vulgar in her manners, I can understand why you should avoid her. But, if you keep away from her—she is your relative now—just because she has been behind a counter, I say it is barbarous!"

"Well, don't yell so. The servants will hear you!"

"I don't care if they do," said Mr. Percival, not lowering his voice. "Give me Duluth! There people don't draw these foolish lines. If a woman is womanly, nobody cares whether she was or is a dressmaker, a school-teacher, or anything honest."

"It's different in the West. I was actually presented at a reception in a small town there to a widow who baked and sold pies."

"So was I! And she was a charming woman, who educated her children by that means. I suppose you wouldn't know her!"

"In Philadelphia,—no!" said Mrs. Percival.

"You're a nice Christian!"

"Christian!" exclaimed Mrs. Percival. "*You* talk of Christianity—nobody knows what you believe."

"If I believed as much as you do, I should practise more!"

Mrs. Percival put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"You will lose your temper, Percival," she said, "I—"

"I saw a thing to-day that taught me a lesson," interrupted her husband: "I was in the Broad Street Station, in the hope of meeting that creature, Ferdinand, on his way up from Bolingbroke, when in came Katharine O'Conor, with her hands full of roses. It made me young again to see her,—but she didn't see me. I watched her through the door of the waiting-room. After awhile she saw an old woman crying in a corner; she looked at her—I could see pity in her face,—and finally dropped one of her roses—magnificent Baronne de Rothschilds they were—into the poor old woman's lap!"

"Baronne de Rothschilds!" and Mrs. Percival, dropped her handkerchief. "Why, they're selling for five dollars apiece, and there are not twenty-five in town, Sherwood says."

"Sherwood?"

"I mean the florist."

"Well, Katharine did not seem to think that the rose was too good for her old woman,—and you should have seen the old woman's face after Katharine passed. It was for a moment free of care; it was almost joyful."

"Katharine is very extravagant," said Mrs. Percival, in an injured tone. "I haven't the slightest doubt that Mrs. Sherwood intended those flowers for me."

"I believe that Katharine holds that nothing is too good for the poor. She went slowly along Chestnut Street, enjoying everything immensely, like a school-girl, and I strolled after her. It was interesting to watch her. She went into St. John's Church,—and, for the first time, I entered the church. Upon my word, going in out of the daylight, I felt awfully impressed. She prayed for awhile, and then left those glorious roses in front of the altar. It reminded me of the scriptural story of the breaking of the box of ointment. *She* evidently thought that nothing was too good for the poor or religion. It was a lesson,—and I felt better for it until you disturbed me by your outrageously unchristian sentiments. I suppose if Katharine O'Conor had happened to be behind Wanamaker's counter, you would 'cut' her dead. How do we know but what our secret relative's wife may be just that sort of girl! It's such nonsense, too,—the girl with the best pedigree in town is teaching music. I met her the other day. Her grandfather was a Marquis and her people are famous for good breeding and cleverness. You wouldn't cut *her* would you?"

"She doesn't go in for society,—she keeps out of it. She has dropped us, in fact, and we have allowed

ourselves to be dropped. She is a girl of good taste; she understands the situation—"

"Which means that this charming girl, clever, well-bred, with more 'birth' than anybody in Philadelphia, is out of society because she is not rich!—come, my dear, form a new society on a more Christian and intelligent basis,—I'm done with your vulgar and artificial nonsense."

"Oh, you're only—a man," said Mrs. Percival, contemptuously. After that, her husband went to his study, and she rested her head on her hand and thought.

That note of Jenny Mavrick's worried her. She could easily guess why it had been sent to Katharine. The "society" paragraph in the papers had contained hints,—which Katharine never saw,—that she was closely attended by Ferdinand Carey, by Wirt Percival, and Lord Marchmont. These bits of advertising had been done by Mrs. Sherwood. No doubt Jane Mavrick had considered it her duty to send a warning to Katharine,—which meant, of course, that "the woman,"—as Mrs. Percival called her bitterly—was alive.

What was to be done? A divorce was impossible,—Mrs. Percival would never consent to that: to be sure the woman might be induced for a certain amount to disappear. As for accepting her husband's suggestion and trying to bring about a reconciliation, that, she held to be out of the question. Mr. Percival had become Quixotic. She would not

consult her confessor,—indeed Mrs. Percival only troubled him at Easter,—for she knew what he would say. Should she send for Ferdinand or Wirt in the morning;—for something must be done. Mrs. Percival shuddered, as she thought of the possibility of some voracious reporter getting hold of the story. Oh, horror of horrors! She read the headlines in her mind—

Romance in Society.
A Noted Leader of the German
Discards his Wife.
Luxury for One, Penury for the
Other.
Mrs. Percival Supports the Heartless
Husband.

And so forth. She went to her desk and wrote at once to Wirt.

That young man at the same hour had finished rifling the orchid-house at Bolingbroke for Katharine's benefit, and a box of flowers had been sent to her which made Mrs. Sherwood cry out in amazement, and, on a paper, among the choicest orchids he had written,—"See Hamlet's billet to Ophelia, and believe it mine to you."

Katharine read this and began to be interested. Wirt Percival had some literary taste, after all, she thought.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Screens at Bolingbroke.

KATHARINE had begun to be interested in Wirt Percival. Riches she valued little, having never known want; social position she did not understand;—the artificial things of this world were not dangerous to her. She was not of the earth, her chief danger lay in her own heart. An enthusiastic girl often chooses for a husband the man that drinks to excess, against all the lessons of experience; he is so generous and noble-hearted when he is sober. Surely she can reform him—he has resisted the words of the priest, the grace of the Sacraments, the tears of his mother, the entreaties of his sister;—but she—and only she—can reform him, and change a satyr to Hyperion! And she rushes to a surer fate than does the Hindu widow to a funeral pyre. She is presumptuous, if you will, and she suffers. A woman may change utterly for the love of a man; but few men—probably three in a thousand years—have changed entirely for the love of a woman. How many times must this be said in vain. There goes Castara, pale, worn, miserable, seeking her husband—who swore last spring to re-

form for her sake—among the taverns of the city; and here comes Iphigenia, passing and pitying her, who to-morrow will marry young Bibulous, in the belief that her influence will make a new man of him!

And Katharine began to dream of Wirt Percival's conversion. She bent over those splendid orchids—she did not like orchids, but they were symbols of her power over Wirt—and prayed that she might be the instrument of his conversion. He was certainly the most interesting man she had met, except young Dillon, whom she would probably never meet again.

Her aunt ceased to talk of marriage; it was no longer held before her as a matter of compulsion, and her own thoughts dwelt on the possibility of converting the man whom she had rejected. In return for the orchids, she sent him her copy of Newman's "Apologia." He could never resist that, she thought. The truth was, that Wirt was entirely incapable of reading ten pages of that book with comprehension. A novel by Ouida was much more in his line. He dipped into the "Apologia," had the thoughtfulness to pencil several passages, "beautiful," "convincing," and sent it back after an interval. He was sure that, if he persevered, he would win Katharine. He was not especially fond of her when she was away from him, but when in her presence he continually thought that she would make a perfect mistress for Bolingbroke; he saw her, in imagi-

nation, receiving guests, making tea in the soft glow of the firelight for the circle of distinguished people he would gather about him, and giving that one touch of feminine grace which was all his beautiful place needed.

He gave his postponed driving-party one day just to show Bolingbroke to Katharine. She thought it compared unfavorably with her beloved convent. The Lady Alicia was in raptures.

"And a coincidence!" she cried—"my father's place was called Bolingbroke before it was sold."

Then followed a discussion as to the merits of Wooten, the show place of the neighborhood, and Bolingbroke. But Ferdinand Carey showed a sketch of a colonial house at Mount Airy which Mrs. Sherwood admired more than anything she had seen. As Lady Alicia knew both the English and the American places called Wooten, her opinion in favor of the American place and of this Bolingbroke, compared with her father's estate, was received with applause by the Americans. Wirt Percival looked at her with new entrancement. He said to himself that, if she only knew how to dress as well as American women, she would be very handsome. Mrs. Sherwood was the chaperon of the party, and she was attended by old Major Fitzgibbons, whose white hat and blue coat with brass buttons, were historic. He had managed a paper for many years, and was famous for his knowledge of the ins and outs of society. She was very fond of him because he could

get "social" paragraphs inserted almost everywhere. And, as Wirt's Madeira was celebrated—the remnants of the famous Rittenhouse Madeira—she had asked for an invitation for the Major.

While Mrs. Sherwood led this old gentleman—bristling with anecdotes—about the place, Wirt and Katharine and the Lady Alicia were looking at the *curios* which the master of Bolingbroke had so carefully collected. He was particularly proud of two large screens that flanked one of his fireplaces.

"Look at the brocade," he said. "Isn't it rich? And the color! Did you ever see such a gorgeous purple, and notice the way in which those golden fleurs-de-lis are embroidered. Five hundred years old, at least, and as fresh as if it were woven yesterday!"

The screens were mounted on heavy frames of carved ebony, and, as the fire glowed on them, they deserved all the praise Wirt could give them. Katharine examined them closely—

"Why," she exclaimed, "here is a cross with rays around it and a chalice worked in gold! What curious ornaments for screens!"

"Oh, you know, they were stolen from a church in Seville; I bought them while I was in Spain. They were vestments or copes or something. And over there is a carved censer that belonged to the same church."

Katharine raised her eyes. Between a bust of Buddha and a Benares vase, swung a brass censer filled with Japanese pastiles. She shrank back.

"Oh, Mr. Percival," she said, "how can you use sacred things in this way? Those screens are made from vestments consecrated to the worship of God."

"They are as beautiful here as they would be in a church," said Percival, carelessly. "And beauty is goodness."

He turned aside to conceal a smile at the distressed look on Katharine's face.

"Oh, Biddy, isn't it dreadful?"

Biddy, as a woman of the world, languidly assented that it was. Katharine had no more pleasure in Bolingbroke. Not the delicious luncheon, the wonderful conservatory, or the china, or the little silver boxes of *marrons glacés* which Wirt had for the ladies, with the right monogram on each, made her forget the censer or the fragments of brocade.

It was a clear, Indian summer afternoon, and they went back to town on the top of the brake, Katharine avoiding Wirt and talking to Ferdinand Carey. This gave the Major a paragraph for one of his "society" columns, and, on paper, the "beauty of the season" was transferred to Mr. Carey—Lord Marchmont being now in New York and the Lady Alicia supposed to be engaged to Mr. Wirt Percival.

Biddy, as Katharine noticed, was in the best possible humor going home. And at the dinner,

which the Major gave at a hostlery on Broad Street, that fashion sometimes favored, she was positively brilliant. Katharine came to the conclusion that her friend must have heard good news. She did not know that Mrs. Percival had that day told her that Wirt was no longer a suitor of Katharine's.

The Lady Alicia had few friends. She had learned to love Katharine, for she was warm-hearted and loyal. She had a specially haunting fear, and this was that she should not be able to make a "good" marriage,—a marriage of reason. Rank without money, as she too well knew, was a delusion and a snare; she had no money. In a few years she must be old, and settle down as a dependent on some reluctant relative. She would not work, for she had been brought up to consider work as a degradation. Marriage was her only refuge, and so far Wirt Percival was the only available husband within sight. She felt that a marriage with the owner of Bolingbroke would fulfil the most sanguine hopes of her American visit.

"Do you really like him?" the Marquise, née Miss Worth, had asked her.

"He is better than I expected," she had answered. "In Dublin we don't expect much of Americans. If they are not vulgar and don't speak too much through their noses, we are content."

The Marquise laughed; it was useless to contend against Biddy's prejudices.

"Mr. Percival is not clever; but he is good-natured; I think I could twist him around my finger."

"My dear," said the Marquise, "no man is good-natured unless he has his own way,—you have no idea how awful Georges can be, if he is crossed. But I must say that American husbands are more easily managed than any other kind," continued the Marquise, with a sigh. "Papa was always mamma's slave,—always! If I didn't have all the money and Georges wasn't so poor, he'd be a real tyrant." The Lady Alicia sighed, too. If she had only a little money, she would never marry any man. Her father had been a tyrant, and she believed that all men, except perhaps Wirt Percival, were tyrants. She would have preferred to marry a Catholic, of course, even if he were a little tyrannical,—for a Catholic has something to be afraid of; but, as there were no eligible Catholics in the Worth set, she felt that she must marry Wirt,—if Katharine did not want him. Nothing would induce her to interfere with Kitty's settlement in life,—nothing.

Mrs. Sherwood had resolved that Katharine should keep Wirt Percival dangling about her, if possible, until Lord Marchmont or some other, more eligible, should appear. She was furious when Wirt laughingly told her of the episode of the screens. She concluded to bring Katharine to her senses. No chance came until the day after the drive to Boling-

broke. Herr Teufelfisch had just left, and Katharine was trying a new song at the piano :—

"Fleur de ma terre! Lune de mon ciel!
Cœur de mon cœur, O mon printemps!" ——

"Do you want to be an old maid?" suddenly asked her aunt.

"I beg pardon," said Katharine, turning on the piano stool.

"I was about to say," continued Mrs. Sherwood, raising her voice, "that, if you want to be an old maid, you have chosen the right way. You showed your low, Irish superstition yesterday at Bolingbroke, and now you devote your time to learning religious hymns in Latin."

Katharine stared, and then turned to the piano, to conceal a reprehensible giggle.

"'Fleur de ma terre' is not a hymn, aunt,—it is only a little song."

"No matter what it is!" cried Mrs. Sherwood. "I don't approve of your superstitious notions. You are out at six o'clock Mass every morning, giving a bad example to the servants."

Katharine faced her aunt, and, to save her life, she could not help smiling. It seemed such an odd way of giving bad example to the servants. The smile exasperated Mrs. Sherwood, though Katharine suppressed it at once.

"Do you think Wirt Percival was pleased yesterday by your words about his screens. I think you

said he had been guilty of sacrilege or something like that,—'sacrilege' was the word you used, I believe."

"I didn't say it," answered Katharine, "but I thought it."

"Never mind what you thought. He understood you to say sacrilege. Do you think he liked it?"

Katharine's face flushed.

"I don't care. If he bought stolen brocade from a church sacristy, I think he helped in a sacrilege!"

"Do you call that ladylike language, Miss?" demanded Mrs. Sherwood.

"It is *my* language!" returned Katharine, with a flash of the eye, of which Mother Ursula would scarcely have approved.

"Correct it, then. Your manner is certainly not what I have a right to expect from a dependent in my house."

Katharine made no answer. She tried the treble part of her song. She *was* a dependent; her aunt was right; she ought to have been more respectful.

Her aunt, fearing for a moment that she had made Katharine defiant, was silent. She determined to bully the girl, now that she had not even spirit enough to reply to her taunt.

"You ought to have learned obedience and gratitude in your convent," she went on. "You make no effort to please me, when you know that all the luxuries you enjoy are gifts from me."

Katharine started. It was true.

"I ask one thing,—that you will hold your tongue about religion, and not discourage Wirt Percival. You do not seem to understand that your only hope for the future is a marriage that will somewhat repay me for the trouble I have taken with you. I say again that I am disappointed in convents. I have always understood that they make girls perfectly docile and obedient. It's your business to encourage Wirt Percival until perhaps a better opportunity occurs."

Katharine held her head very high.

"The lesson you are trying to teach me now is not to be learned in convents," she said. "There is nothing unwomanly taught there."

"Do you mean to say that I am unwomanly?" cried Mrs. Sherwood, making a gesture as if she would have liked to smite Katharine with her open hand. Her face flushed, the bangles at her wrist jingled. "Do you mean to say that I am unwomanly because I look to the future? It's your business to do the best you can for yourself,—to settle yourself in life. Do you think that you are always to be ornamental,—sitting at a piano, singing idiotic German songs, or holding flowers at a dance? Am I working my fingers to the bone trying to make you the fashion, that you may do nothing by way of return? You might have caught Lord Marchmont, if you had not been such a fool!"

Katharine had grown pale, but now the blood colored her face and neck; she felt an impulse as

if to turn aside from the sight of something that shocked her.

"Aunt," she said, "you cannot mean what you say,—you cannot! My uncle surely didn't—"

"Your uncle expects you to do your duty."

"But not *that*—not to—to catch—"

"My words are too vulgar, are they?" demanded Mrs. Sherwood, losing her temper altogether. "They shock your modesty; but I'd like to know who's to pay for your frocks, and all your luxuries? Your uncle will do it, if you make a good marriage; but if you don't, you'll be simply an idle girl about the house!"

Katharine's impulse was to cry out that she would leave the house. Her aunt divined her thought.

"You'll go away? No; you will not, my dear, —not when all the goods of this world are thrown at your feet, and you don't have to work for them. Why, that gown you have on to-day cost your uncle a lot of money. When you come to your senses, and regain your temper, you can come to my room and talk things over. You can't always live in a fool's Paradise!"

And Mrs. Sherwood was about to leave the room with a great jingling of bangles, when a servant pulled aside the portière. He gave Mrs. Sherwood a note, the envelope of which bore Wirt Percival's coat of arms, which made a labyrinth of quarterings. She tore it open.

"DEAR MRS. SHERWOOD: Permit me to offer Miss O'Conor the screens and the censer she saw at Bolingbroke yesterday. I understand that they have some special religious association for her. I know you would object, if I offered them as a gift,—I merely ask that they shall be restored by her, if possible, to their original use.

"Yours sincerely,

"W. WIRT PERCIVAL."

"It's lucky you did not offend him," said Mrs. Sherwood, giving Katharine the note. "He has done this thing very delicately, I must say, though you did not deserve it. And those lovely carved frames! They will suit the little tea-room admirably!"

And, mollified, she swept from the room. Katharine closed the piano. The sinking of the heart, the feeling of abasement with which she had listened to her aunt's tirade, were gone.

"The tea-room!" she repeated. Then she called the servant.

"Was there a box with this note?"

"It has just come, Miss,—the men haven't taken it out of the wagon yet."

"Tell them to take it to St. Clare's Church at once,—I'll write the address."

She remembered with irritation that she had not even a card of her own,—her name had so far been written on Mrs. Sherwood's. She tore a leaf out of

a memorandum book, and wrote to the priest at St. Clare's:

"DEAR FATHER: Please use these in the church. They belong to it; I merely restore them; I will explain to-morrow morning after Mass."

Looking out of the window, she had the satisfaction of seeing the wagon go off, laden with the screens. They would never adorn Mrs. Sherwood's Japanese tea-room.

If Katharine ever longed for the wings of a dove, it was at that moment. Oh, to be free!—to be free! Of what use was all this luxury, all this wealth, if sordidness and hardness and scorn existed with it. Nobody loved her except the nuns, and they were far away. Perhaps, after all, her best escape was to marry Wirt Percival, since her aunt said she could if she wanted to; better him a thousand times than Lord Marchmont; these were her thoughts.

CHAPTER XIX.

Ferdinand Carey.

TO be alone when one is young is hard. Older folk get used to it. To be unloved, scorned, rejected, to have hard words hurled at one, is even harder in youth than in age. Katharine for a few brief days had been petted, made much of, deferred to. She did not know that she was to be the favorite of the season, but everybody around her did, for Mrs. Sherwood had artlessly "worked" the newspapers, and Mrs. Percival had praised Katharine everywhere; she was, in fact, a "new flavor," and even the musical people, who are proverbially caustic, approved of her, since Herr Teufelfisch concluded that she could sing. It happened that society had not had a new sensation for some time, and it was quite willing to take up Katharine.

After her interview with her aunt, Katharine was as near despair as any Christian girl could be. But the feeling of utter abasement lasted only for a half hour. Here was her rosary; there was her statue of our Lady holding out the Child Jesus to her. After all, what were Mrs. Sherwood's insults compared with the consolations she had. She was surrounded

by unalterable love, she was held in the hollow of God's hands, and the storms might rage. She was a dependent, she knew—she had just been reminded of it; but now was her time to remember that she was likewise a dependent on God. Mrs. Sherwood might insult; but with faith and a clear conscience, Katharine felt that no insults could really touch her.

Mrs. Sherwood believed that Katharine would suffer anything rather than give up the luxuries which surrounded her. She judged the girl by herself. Wealth, luxury, social distinction supplied with Mrs. Sherwood the place of religion; she had stifled all its inspirations long ago; she was of the world worldly, and she imagined that inside the veneer of religion and simplicity there was in Katharine's character an inordinate desire for the things she herself loved. She told herself with satisfaction that there need be no more concealments between her and her niece. She had been frank; she had shown Katharine that if she owed her present social elevation to her, Katharine was as a mere beggar in her house. She knew well that Mr. Sherwood would have been disgusted with her assumption; but he was out of the way, and by the time he should return Katharine and she would understand each other and be able to work together toward that glittering point, a foreign marriage, at the same time keeping Wirt Percival well in hand in case there should be "a slip between the cup and the lip."

Unhappily for her plans, she did not know Katharine. Even Biddy, who had known her only a little while, and then mostly through correspondence, could have undeceived her.

Katharine, lonely, crushed, despondent, said her beads, and then packed up all her cotillon favors to send to her little Cuban friend at school. Her heart went back in a great burst of love to the convent. She had not remembered all the kind ones there, and she was punished. She wrote to Mother Ursula a letter which made the kind nun shake her head and say, "The thorns are beginning to pierce her."

Having finished her letter, she thought awhile. She would leave her uncle's house at once. Her aunt had left her no resource. Her uncle—she could not think of him without affection—no doubt expected her to follow her aunt's advice, since scheming and hypocrisy seemed to be the way in this world.

But where could she go? She had two hundred dollars of her own, and a few dresses—she could not take any of those fashionable gowns, the price of which her aunt had thrown in her face. She would leave all the recent gifts behind her and go out as she had come. After all, in the working world people made their own clothes, and frocks done by the favorite tailors of society would be of little use, since nobody would care especially for them.

Her heart rose and sank at the prospect. She would make her own way; she would be independent. She was not afraid of poverty, she had

seen how the sisters practised it at the convent; she laughed when she thought how little she feared it, it needed so little to make her content. A few books, a little room, a warm cloak, a few coals in winter, and she could live. Katharine looked at her hands; if they could not earn these things for her in the wide world, she would remain a "dependent." She laughed at the thought of failure. But her heart sank at the prospect of living among strangers, new people with peculiar notions, cold hearts, and suspicious eyes. Katharine shuddered as she saw the suspicious eyes of strangers in her imaginations. Katharine felt that she could endure hard work and frugal living, but that she wanted the sunshine of love and appreciation. She shrank from the thought of unkindness and suspicion. She thought of Wirt Percival. She might end it all by marrying him; then she would be no longer dependent on her uncle and aunt. She did not dislike him; she might convert him, and she knew that he could be led to propose again by a smile or word from her. She knew just as well as if she had been a belle of many seasons that her uncle's money had great weight with the people about her, and that even to Wirt Percival it had certain charms. Yes, she would leave the house. If he thought it worth while to follow her, to find her out, to love her as a penniless and friendless girl, she might accept him as her husband.

"I will never," she resolved, "marry to avoid poverty. If I cannot earn my own living in some way, I would make a very poor wife," she added.

People would "cut" any woman who earned wages,—she had learned that from Mrs. Sherwood. The Percivals would pass her in the street without a look; Biddy might pity her, but she too would be obliged by her caste to look down on the woman who worked for wages. She could never hope to meet any of the people she had met in society on terms of equality again. This conviction stung Katharine, for she was very proud.

She went to the little church with a sad heart. The priest was at home. She did not know him well, but she knew that he was a priest—that was enough. She poured out her whole story to him. He was gentle and grave. He advised her to stay with her uncle and aunt for the present.

"Wait, at least," he said, "until your uncle returns; you owe it to him. But, my child, suffer any hardship rather than marry a man not of your own faith."

Katharine went to confession after this. She would follow God's will, no matter how hard it was.

She went down to dinner and sat opposite to her aunt, trying to speak as if nothing had happened. Ferdinand Carey dropped in after dinner. He soon grew tired of Mrs. Sherwood's chatter about social trifles and asked Katharine to sing. She assented,

of course. Cardinal Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," lay on the music-rack.

> "Lead, Kindly Light, 'mid the encircling gloom.
> Lead thou me on!"

She sang well, but rather weariedly, wishing that she could escape to her room. Carey brightened up.

"The charm of that lovely hymn is wonderful. But you Catholics,—pardon me,—never sing it with as much feeling as non-Catholics."

"There! I told you," murmured Mrs. Sherwood to herself, "I knew the girl couldn't sing."

Katharine read the last lines over again before she answered.

"And yet Cardinal Newman was a Catholic when he wrote it," added Carey.

"Not quite," said Katharine, "he wanted to be in communion with the saints gone before, those 'angel faces' which he had 'loved so long and lost awhile.' I have often wondered why this hymn is not sung more in our own churches. But I understand it now. It is the song of one who waits and longs, not of one who is in the full light of the tabernacle."

"The girl can talk," said Carey to himself. He looked at the glowing wood-fire, at Katharine in her white gown just tinted with the color of the fire, at the books on the table, the music-sheets on the piano, and sighed.

Katharine raised her eyes to his. Why should he sigh? Her heart was heavy enough, and she did not believe that the heart of any living creature could be as heavy. The expression on Ferdinand Carey's face told her that he had his sorrow, too. His face changed instantly, as he caught her glance, into the usually suave expression he wore as a mask. Ah, there were many griefs in the world, no doubt? But what could this strong man have to bear? He was not a dependent; he had not the problems that puzzled her to solve.

"If I were a man," said Katharine, half-aloud, "I would let nothing grieve me."

Carey heard what she intended only for the piano-rack.

"If you were a man," he repeated, smiling.

Katharine colored and hesitated. "If I were a man," she said, "nothing would frighten me. I should face the world and delight in it. A strong man should never be unhappy."

Carey was amazed. Here was a woman so unused to the ways of society that she actually translated the expression on a man's face into words.

Ferdinand Carey was unhappy—more unhappy than Katharine had ever been, and let us hope, would ever be. Mrs. Sherwood had carefully written the *menu* for the next day's dinner and had gone out with it. Carey had a sudden impulse to tell his sorrows to this girl, whose innocence and sympathy attracted him. She would not understand him, but

at any rate she would not scoff at him. He rose from his seat and went to the piano. She looked at him in her frank way.

"I envy you, Miss O'Conor," he said, "the luxury of confession. I have often envied my sister, Mrs. Percival, the consolation of pouring forth her sorrows into a sympathetic ear, into the ear of one sworn to secrecy."

"Confession isn't a luxury," said Katharine, "it is a necessity. I am sure that I do not like to go to confession."

"Why it is the one thing that would draw me into your church."

Katharine laughed.

"I find it hard to go to confession,—for I have sins to confess. One doesn't go to confession merely to pour out one's sorrows."

"Sins!" repeated Carey. "I fancied the world had wiped out sin. We don't hear of it any more. Circumstances force us to do things. The unknowable is responsible, not we!"

He said this half lightly.

"You surely do not believe that," she answered.

"Many people believe it. Ernest Rénan teaches it."

"Rénan? Oh, you mean the man Père Didon has answered in his Life of Our Lord."

"The same. But I don't believe that your Dominican has answered him,—he is a man of genius."

"And so is Père Didon, and a man of learning too."

Carey smiled.

"Well, read his book. I will lend it to you. The Marquis sent me an early copy. I will send it to-morrow."

"And you expect me to read a long, polemical book!"

"I presume that any man of sense would read both sides of an argument on such an important subject, if he had not made up his mind."

"Thank you, I will read it," he said. "This convent-girl has more in her than I supposed," he thought. "I *am* unhappy, Miss O'Conor," he said aloud, "and I should like to talk to you."

Katharine stopped the low melody she had been almost unconsciously playing while she talked. Carey bent forward, a question trembling on his lips. At that moment Mrs. Sherwood entered with a great rustling. She paused on the threshold and smiled in a sneering way:

"I can trust her to net the men and take care of herself. She is flirting with Carey, now," this woman, whose world could not rise above itself, thought.

"I am sorry," Katharine said, hastily, "but believe me, Mr. Carey, our sorrows grow less after we have rooted out our sins. Oh, I don't mean," she began, seeing what her words might imply, "I don't mean—"

"You mean to be kind, Miss O'Conor," he said, gravely. "Thank you." And he asked Mrs. Sherwood whether she had read Mr. Ward McAllister's book. The line of talk changed at once.

CHAPTER XX.

Who?

MR. SHERWOOD did not come home. "One of his orphans," his wife said sarcastically, "was in trouble, and he neglected everything else as usual." He was most attentive to the several wards in his care. Mrs. Sherwood and Katharine were polite to each other. There was a veiled contempt in Mrs. Sherwood's politeness. She believed that she had Katharine under her thumb, and she despised her accordingly.

"She is as selfish as anybody—she can't deceive me. But I'll use her to the utmost socially. How lucky I am to be able to play such a card!"

To add to her triumph, Lord Marchmont, with that delicacy which characterized certain travelling Britons, had contributed an article to a New York paper, in which he had described Katharine as the most distinguished young woman he had met. Mrs. Sherwood had kindly supplied her niece's photograph and had the article reproduced in several Philadelphia papers. Katharine had no knowledge of this until it was too late, unfortunately. Mother Ursula, to whom somebody sent a marked copy of

the New York newspaper, wrote a severe and warning letter to Katharine, and Katharine rushed off to the Lady Alicia for an explanation.

"I thought you knew all about it," said Biddy; "I don't think it's a nice custom to print women's pictures in the papers, but it's the fashion in England, and I presume you Americans think nothing wrong that the English do."

"You are unjust to Americans, Biddy," cried Katharine, blushing to her ears as her friend held out the papers. "All Americans are not like the few you have met in society. *I* am an American, and I hate such 'immodesty,' as Mother Ursula justly calls this newspaper display."

"You have been well brought up," answered Biddy, "that makes a difference. And you have good blood in your veins. Most Americans like display. The Worth girls—but I must not criticise my hostesses."

"Oh, dear, dear, what *shall* I do about it?" exclaimed Katharine. "Write to the editor?"

"Do, if you want more notoriety."

"I don't. Oh, I wish I could see Mother Ursula and say that I couldn't help it."

"You might tell her that every girl in your set would give all her pocket-money for Lord Marchmont's opinion of her good looks publicly expressed."

"It must stop!"

"As you are in this mood, you had better stop certain paragraphs in the papers. There is one that

appeared this morning, for instance." Biddy went to her desk and gave Katharine a paragraph which she had cut out of a morning journal.

"The rumor that Miss Katharine O'Conor, the heiress of Mr. Marcus Sherwood, is engaged to Mr. Wirt Percival is contradicted on good authority. It is presumed, therefore, that Lord Marchmont is in the field."

Tears came into Katharine's eyes.

"This is an outrage, Biddy! Who puts such insolent things in the papers?"

The Lady Alicia smiled and said:

"I fancy your aunt could tell."

"Do you think she knows?"

"Of course. You are very innocent, Kitty. Tell me; are you really engaged to Wirt Percival?"

"How can you ask me such a question, Biddy? You ought to know me better than anybody else."

"It is too bad, Kit," said the Irish girl, affectionately, "that we have had such little time for intimate talk. Since we've met we have been living in a whirl. There are many things in the old letters which I would like to ask you about. These letters of yours were always so kind and sweet, like a perfume. Our life was very hard on the other side," added the Lady Alicia with a sigh. "Nobody has any idea how difficult it is to have rank and little money. Papa was always careworn, always grumbling. And we hadn't a carriage or even a car sometimes, and our credit wasn't always good, for the

rents don't come in as they used to. I often wearied for some new land where people didn't mind; where one could carry a package in the street, if one wanted to, and where it didn't matter whether one had a title or not. I thought from your letters that America was different; but I find it's almost the same kind of life,—why, nobody is poor."

"I *know* it is different. I assure you there are poor people in America, and no doubt nice rich ones, too—very different from all those we happen to know!" exclaimed Katharine, eagerly.

"I suppose there are poor people here, but I don't want to know them. I might fall in love with one, you know, and an earl's daughter with no dowry can't marry a poor man, you know," Lady Alicia said.

"Why not?" asked Katharine. "An earl's daughter is not different from any other woman, is she? She has a heart, and a soul to save. I sometimes think, Biddy, that you'd marry anybody that is rich."

"I *must*," said Biddy, shrugging her shoulders.

"*Must!*" cried Katharine. "*Must!* You are a slave!—a slave!"

"Perhaps I am, my dear. The conventions of my rank in life force me to marry a man with money. Imagine the Lady Alicia Bridget St. John opening the door for people who call to ask whether her husband the clerk is at home. Fancy!"

"Well, what of it," asked Katharine sturdily, "if you did it for the glory of God and made your

husband happy? Mother Ursula said many times that one should marry only that man one could respect and love—'respect and love,' she said."

"Oh, you don't understand," said Biddy, sadly. "I am a slave; I was born one; I can't help it. Your aunt was here, yesterday, asking all sorts of questions about your father and his family."

"Let us go away," said Katharine, taking her friend's hand. "Let us live simple, honest lives—"

"As they did in the golden age," interrupted the Lady Alicia, with a long sigh. "You shall be Rosalind, and I, Celia, and we will go into the Forest of Arden. Oh, my dear, you will not find a *boudoir* like this in your Forest of Arden."

The Lady Alicia looked around at the appointments of the sitting room the amiable Worths had allotted to her.

"You will not find a Steinway like that, or a statuette like that, or hot-house roses, or a Louis Seize desk like that in the corner, or women who know how to make gowns like the one you have on. No, Kit, the Forest of Arden would not suit me; and even if I met an Orlando, he would probably have to utilize his talent for boxing in the prize-ring. Nonsense, dear, dreams of youth!"

Katharine closed her lips tight.

"I am not afraid of poverty; I can work; I hate lies and artifice; I hate what you call 'society;' I want to be free; I don't want to become frivolous; I am not a dreamer. If my aunt has been guilty

of exhibiting me in public, as you say, I shall feel myself free to go out, to make my own way in the world. Many girls do it. We were not taught in the convent to be fine ladies."

"You would make a charming shop-girl!"

"I would do my duty," said Katharine, earnestly. "I imagine, though, that after all the care the nuns —thanks to my uncle—have expended on me, that I may lead a freer life than the shop-girl leads. And even if I had to stand behind a counter all day, I should respect myself. Many gentlewomen do it. Let us go away together, let us not be ashamed of our poverty; let us be free."

"The prospect has temptations when I look into your face," said the Lady Alicia, smiling. "I would like to be free—that is, to be rich; for only the rich are free. But I am too artificial for your Forest of Arden. Rosalind didn't care whether people ate with their forks or not; she hadn't a taste for perfumes, and dainty dishes and the right sort of perfume in her carriage-cushions, and good music, and the Dublin horse-show, and the Castle balls. Ah, no, Kit; I *must* marry a rich man, and soon, too. Are you really not engaged to Wirt Percival?"

"No; haven't I said so?"

"Girls often say—"

"You mean girls in society; I am a woman."

Biddy laughed.

"What dignity! If he asked you, would you marry him?"

Katharine hesitated.

"If he asked me—"

"That is enough," said the Lady Alicia, her brow clouding, "you do like him."

"Let me think," said Katharine, looking gravely out of the window. "No—yes. I like him because he is frank; I don't like him because he would be arrogant if he could; he has no deep feelings; he believes that because he is rich and Wirt Percival, everything ought to bend to him. No, I don't like him; but I fancy that, if he were a Catholic, I might marry him just to get away from my aunt."

Katharine put her hand hastily to her lips. Her friend pretended not to notice the slip.

"No," said Katharine, after a short pause, "I am wronging myself. I would stand behind a counter all day before I would marry Wirt Percival, with Bolingbroke and all his riches thrown in. No; I will be free to make the best of myself, to save my soul. Biddy, I have thought a great deal about life. People think that the meditations of the Rosary are mere 'pious exercises' which have nothing to do with our daily life. Why they have been almost daily bread to me. What lessons have I not learned from them! Our Lady was a woman—the most blessed and purest of women! She was free to choose, and she chose to be the Mother of Our Lord. She chose it; God left her free, and we love her because she accepted His will with her *will*. A woman is not a mere toy of circumstances; she has

her mission, which is not to sacrifice herself in order that she may live among hot-house roses and have luxuries."

"But all the good things of earth are bought with money," said Biddy, interested, in spite of her cynicism.

"Are they? Are my uncle and aunt in possession of the best things of life, though they are rich? Is Mrs. Percival happy or content? Is Ferdinand Carey happy? Are the Marquis and Marquise happy, though she has his title and he has her wealth? Our nuns, who were poor, were as happy as human creatures could be. If riches were necessary to us, God would give them to all the world. They are a power, but a pure and loving heart is a greater power, as prayer is greater than gold."

Biddy sighed again.

"Enough eloquence, my child! What will you wear to-night? You will, no doubt, have something sumptuous for your coming-out party."

"Oh, I hate it all!" said Katharine. "I hate it all because—because— But I must not complain about my aunt."

"I understand—she makes her gifts hard to take. But what will you wear?"

"A beautiful dress, with the silver and peach-blossoms my aunt has chosen for me arranged in a new way. It *is* beautiful, Kit," added Katharine, with a spark of interest, "and there is the most graceful train, trimmed with white feathers."

"There are no trains in Arden," said Biddy, with a twinkle in her eye.

"I like a train," said Katharine, frankly. "But a train is not much of life."

"It will be the smartest function ever given in this set," the Lady Alicia said. "Your aunt has engaged Augustine for the supper, and rifled the florists. But you really don't like Wirt Percival?"

"If I liked him, I should hesitate before I married him. I was a little doubtful, but I was afraid to face life and duty then; I am not afraid now."

The Lady Alicia looked relieved; she had made up her mind. She had gauged Percival's depth, and she had only two weeks of her visit left: she must make her great stroke in a few days. She was sad; she hated her own weakness; she admired Katharine's position, but she dared not imitate it. She was about to act against her conscience to avoid going back to Dublin and dependence. "Free!" she said to herself, bitterly, "free!" She might be free, if she did not prefer slavery to poverty. No, she would be a slave rather than be poor. And society on both sides of the water would have applauded her decision.

Katharine reached Kenwood about noon. The house was in a state of disorder, out of which was to come the most beautiful dinner and cotillon party ever given in Kenwood, or any place within miles. Mrs. Sherwood had been besieged with demands for cards from all the best people, many of whom she

had never met. She was having bouillon in her room when Katharine came in. Things were going well; she was excited, but cheerful. She sent for her niece.

"Oh, my dear," she said, dipping into a pile of notes by her side on the spindle-legged table, "hardly a regret! Everybody will be here! And the florist has carried out a *lovely* idea of mine! Each guest, whether in the German or not, is to have a bouquet of orchids with your crest done in the heraldic colors on an immense band of ribbon."

"My crest?" said Katharine.

"The Lady Alicia told me all about it yesterday; your father must have been quite a gentleman in the old country."

"Aunt," said Katharine, "if you do anything so absurd, I shall stay in my room. I have been made ashamed by your—by the newspapers. I am a woman, and I have no right to a crest. My father may have cherished some remembrances of his family, and I always use his seal—Biddy knows that; but surely you will not make it so ridiculous!"

Katharine, beginning to cry, left the room. She would not—she could not endure this atmosphere any longer.

"There's no doing anything with that girl; she has no social perspective," said Mrs. Sherwood; "she is like Mr. Sherwood. The crest shall appear, nevertheless. The stationer says that our coat-of-arms is a green shield with a man pendant, and the

crest a bow and arrows with the motto, '*je prends mon bien où je le trouve*,' whatever that means; he says we're descended from Robin Hood, of Sherwood. Thank Heaven she has sense enough to know on which side her bread is buttered,—and Lord Marchmont's coming to-night!"

By eight o'clock, the hour of dinner, Mrs. Sherwood's house was like a fairy palace. Half a hundred servants in green liveries stood about, ready to form in two lines under the long awning that ran down through the grounds to the gate-way the moment the guests for the cotillon should begin to arrive. Two of these servants, with powdered wigs and glittering buttons, stood at each side of the staircase as Katharine came down to the drawing-room. There was soft music, as of zithers, somewhere; she could not help uttering an exclamation of pleasure at the sight before her. With flowers, lights, mirrors, and hangings, the big hall had been transformed into a bower of beauty.

Katharine looked well; she had more color than usual, and there was a new light in her eyes. Her gown of white and silver and peach color, with its great train of lace and feathers, suited her admirably. As she reached the end of the staircase, one of the stately footmen gave her a note, which she took mechanically, thinking it was one of her aunt's mysterious messages. She put it into the big nosegay she carried. Her aunt would probably say what she had to say, and there was no

time to read it, for Mr. and Mrs. Worth and the girls were entering.

The dinner was brilliant; Lord Marchmont took her in and was very attentive. Wirt Percival, who in the absence of Mr. Sherwood, took in the Lady Alicia, glanced towards her anxiously once or twice. Katharine did not speak much; she was righteously indignant, for at every plate was a nosegay with that wretched crest painted on the white ribbon attached to it.

"He seems attentive," she heard Percival whisper to her aunt in the drawing-room before they went in to dinner. "I mean Lord Marchmont."

"It is arranged," answered her aunt, with her artificial smile. "Lord Marchmont has asked my consent—in fact, many letters have passed; the engagement will be announced to-morrow."

It was no wonder that Katharine answered Lord Marchmont in monosyllables. She felt every attention as an insult—and he was very attentive, because Mrs. Sherwood had informed him by letter that Katharine would have a million (he had some difficulty in reducing it to pounds sterling), and that he had only to go in and win the lady, who was willing.

When the oysters and soup had been served by the twenty servants who stood each behind the chair of a guest, and Mr. Percival had praised the sherry, Katharine began to forget her indignation and to see some humor in the situation. Wirt Percival had

evidently accepted the mitten with grace. Katharine heard Biddy say to him:

"I must go away in a short time, and I shall never see you all again. I must go in two weeks. Lord Bolingbroke insists."

Wirt looked at the Lady Alicia and resolved to offer her the heart Katharine had refused. Bolingbroke!—to be the son-in-law of Lord Bolingbroke! Yes, he could forget that Katharine was clever, pretty, rich, and good, for that!

Katharine's spirits revived; she began to enjoy an *entrée* of unknown but delicious substance; she flashed repartees at Lord Marchmont; her aunt looked at her and felt triumphant. Katharine, with a touch of malice, smiled back at her. Her aunt, forgetting her recently-acquired repose, actually winked.

After the grand flower figure of the cotillon, Lord Marchmont asked her to take a walk through the great corridor made by lighted and palm-decorated tents which radiated from the house. Katharine's time had come.

"Lord Marchmont," she said, "I heard what my aunt said a moment ago. If I went with you, the newspapers might say we were engaged to be married; and as neither you nor I care for that sort of publicity, I must decline."

She went up the stairs very quickly, her train gliding after her like a brilliant snake. Lord Marchmont stood watching her. At the top she met

Biddy, who had only time to whisper, as the music for the next figure was beginning:

"Wirt has asked me and I have consented; I am going to make a marriage of reason."

"And I am not!"

Katharine went to her room. And Mrs. Sherwood, thinking she was safe with Lord Marchmont, boldly announced that she would take a house in London for the next season! Katharine threw down her bouquet and dropped into a chair. Surely, if she must live this way, life was not worth living. The note the footman had given her fell upon the carpet. She picked it up; she read—

"MISS O'CONOR:

"I am sorry you did not come. Let me tell you, to save you future mortification, that the man you are engaged to is the husband of my sister.

"J. MAVRICK."

What did it mean? Who was it? Wirt Percival? There were greater sorrows than hers. She put the paper into a drawer and went down in a subdued frame of mind to help her aunt say goodbye to the guests.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Donna Quixota."

MRS. SHERWOOD soon understood the position of affairs. Katharine did not come down to the late breakfast. Her aunt thought that she remained upstairs through fear; she smiled bitterly and nursed her wrath. What did the girl mean by playing fast and loose in this way? Wirt Percival had been permitted to engage himself to the Lady Alicia, and Lord Marchmont had been snubbed. Was there a Duke in prospect, that this penniless young creature should comport herself with so much arrogance?

But Katharine was not afraid. She was not one of those who value peace so highly that they will sacrifice self-respect and principle for it. An unpleasant interview, provided she felt blameless in conscience, had no terrors for her. Mrs. Sherwood did not know this; she looked forward in triumph towards the coming scene, and said to herself that she would force Katharine into compliance, send for Marchmont, and arrange the marriage on a reasonable basis, as they do in France. Katharine was not

fool enough to give up her present advantages for a nonsensical prejudice.

Katharine read over and over again the note she had received and, in comparison with its contents, her aunt's wrath seemed a mere trifle. What did it mean? The people who read the "society" columns no doubt believed that she was engaged to Wirt Percival or to Lord Marchmont. To which of them did the writer of the note point? Katharine was impetuous enough at times, but she had been taught to be prudent where other people were involved. She knew that if she mentioned the subject either to her aunt or Mrs. Percival it would be no secret. She could not mention it to the Lady Alicia until she knew just what it meant. She wished ardently that her uncle were at home. She felt that she could trust *him*. She would wait awhile—haste is generally a fault. She put away carefully her ball dress and arranged everything in her room in the most orderly manner. She packed her trunk and satchel, leaving out all the frocks and ornaments her aunt had given her. She would, at least, be prepared to end a struggle with no empty threat. She counted her money. She had three hundred dollars—given to her by her uncle at various times. She would take this and pay it back after a time, she said. She would not go away if she could help it, and, if she could not help it she would go away as quickly as possible. Where? Out in the world like any poor girl to earn her living. She would have to go

without a chaperon! The thought made her smile, although it did seem a difficulty at first. But she remembered that there were thousands of working girls in the city to whom her difficulty would seem the height of the ridiculous.

She made a plan before luncheon, and descended to the table with composure. The meal, made up of odds and ends left from the dinner of the night before, was of unusual dimensions.

Mrs. Sherwood smiled, and in a dulcet voice tenderly inquired after Katharine's health. Then she opened fire.

"You are sorry no doubt for your shameless conduct to Lord Marchmont last night."

Mrs. Sherwood fixed her eyes on her niece with what she considered to be a potential look.

"I am not sorry," said Katharine, in a decided voice. "I heard your whisper last night, and I guessed the rest. I will not be handed to any man like a bale of goods."

"Why did you encourage him?"

"You encouraged him."

"Perhaps you have a Duke in prospect," she sneered.

"I am sick of this kind of talk, aunt. You have neutralized your kindness by treating me as if I were a slave, to be sold for the price of your social advancement. It is un-Christian, it is inhuman! I will not marry anybody! I will not, at any rate, make what you call a marriage of reason!"

"Possibly you are in love with Ferdinand Carey. He was very, very attentive to you the other night, I observed—that is, I couldn't help observing—"

Mrs. Sherwood paused; Katharine started, but suppressed the reply that rose to her lips—this was the time for a Hail Mary.

"Of all things," went on Mrs. Sherwood, "I abhor a coquette—above all a flirt who has learned in a convent how to be demure and hypocritical."

Katharine raised her head and flashed a glance across at her aunt; she put down her fork; she could not eat her aunt's food. She remembered the priest's words; she would endure as long as she could. She rose from the table, her eyes bright, her cheeks flushed. Mrs. Sherwood rose too, carried away by her pent-up anger.

"You will give me your word to accept Lord Marchmont, if he asks you, or leave this house!" she said, pursuing her niece to the door.

"You threaten, aunt;" said Katharine, standing with the portière in her hand, and looking back. "If you knew me better, you would not threaten."

Mrs. Sherwood went back to the dining-room, angry and puzzled. But by the time the carriage came around to take her to the city, she had come to the conclusion that Katharine would be glad to accept her terms.

Katharine went back to her room and meditated. She would do nothing hastily. It was plain to her that she could no longer stay in her aunt's house

amid constant quarrels. She was sure that her uncle would not approve of her aunt's course of action. But that was no relief to the present condition of affairs. On his return it would only cause dissensions between her uncle and aunt. There was no place for her. She must go! She had obeyed her confessor to the limits he had set for her. It was hard, but she was no worse off than thousands of girls; she could do her best and leave the rest to God.

She ordered the butler to have her bag and trunk sent down to the station. That personage, who had lately been imported, had been trained to ask no questions and show no emotion. She found her luggage awaiting her when she went down to catch the half-past two o'clock train; she had it checked to the Colonnade Hotel. Why should she disguise her goings in or comings out? As soon as she should be settled in a permanent place she would send her aunt her address and write to her uncle. It was a question of self-respect, she said to herself, not of pride.

Once in the car, with her luggage checked, she felt that the great step had been taken; her hedges were burned; she was about to enter the whirl of the world, to leave the sheltered life which had been hers from infancy. Her heart beat a little faster than usual and her eyes dimmed, as she recalled the debt of gratitude she owed her uncle. The train had not started. Should she go back and wait until

he should come home? No; that might be grateful, but it would be unkind, for assuredly it would cause dissensions between her uncle and aunt. After all, it was right that her aunt should decide on what terms a guest should remain in her house. A day might come when she would have a chance of showing her uncle that she was not ungrateful; she would wait.

Nevertheless it depressed her to think that there was not one in the household to say good-bye to her—and yet there was. She glanced out of the window just before the train started, and noticed that somebody was waving a great bunch of white roses. It was Peter McCready, the butler whom Mrs. Sherwood had recently engaged. He was a short man, with a red nose, and twinkling eyes, and great dignity of deportment. He took off his hat, and pushed the roses through the car window.

"The gardener told me to give you these, he says that you always take flowers with you when you're going out, and as I was coming this way," he added, remembering his dignity, "I was glad to take them. They're beauties; he cut them for you before luncheon."

Almost involuntarily Katharine grasped the hand that held the roses. It was like a ray of light to see that there was one person in her uncle's house who thought kindly of her.

"Good-bye, Peter," she said, "good-bye. And tell the gardener that I shall not forget his kind-

ness—I love flowers as much as he does, and say to him," she added, with a smile, remembering a certain controversy, "that I still believe that it is a great mistake to fumigate Catharine Mermet roses."

"He will do it," said the butler. "You can't change a Scotchman."

"Good-bye—good-bye!" And the train moved out of the station. Peter would have liked to ask whether she would be long away or not.

"The house will be dull without her," he murmured.

Katharine buried her face in the nosegay of Bride roses and felt cheered. It must be indeed a sad time for her when roses could not cheer her. In a short time the brakeman called out "Philadelphia," and she walked through the station to Broad street. Life seemed a little darker to her than it had seemed the last time she had entered that station. A newsboy held his papers out to her; she bought two, not because she wanted them, but because she was about to earn her living, and people who earned their living ought to help each other. She was tempted to take a hansom, but she remembered that henceforth she must not indulge in such luxuries; she was a working girl now, and every cent would count. She walked to Chestnut Street, unencumbered except by the roses and the luggage checks she held nervously in her hand for fear of losing them.

She had hardly turned the corner of Broad and Chestnut when a voice from the street hailed her.

It was the Lady Alicia, in the Worth carriage. Katharine stopped and the coachman drove up to the sidewalk.

"I knew you at once by that bunch of roses. It was easy enough to guess who was hidden among them. Let me give you a lift. I am out calling with a stack of the Worth cards, besides my own. I have been praying at every door I came to that the people may not be at home. Where are *you* going?"

Biddy seemed to be in excellent spirits; her color was higher than usual, her white teeth gleamed in frequent smiles, and there was an air of robust health and satisfaction about her.

Katharine hesitated. Why would people who prided themselves on their good breeding ask such direct questions?

"I am not going far."

"Let me give you a lift."

Katharine hesitated.

"Oh, come, get in—I want to talk to you. I'm so glad that I am settled at last. My father and brothers will think it lovely to get me off their hands without the expense of a London season. So get in!"

"But I'm going only to the Colonnade Hotel," said Katharine, "and you have your calls to make. If you like, I'll meet you in an hour at Blank's — you know where they have those delicious ices."

Katharine was anxious to get a little time for thought—to be away from everybody.

"Yes," said Biddy, "you Americans make the best in the world — which is about the only thing you do well. But I don't want ices — I want to talk to you. Step in; I'll make a call or two, and then drive you for your call at the hotel. The Colonnade? Who that *we* know can possibly live there?"

Katharine got into the carriage with as much bustle as possible to avoid answering this question.

"Wirt is really very nice," began Biddy, "he brought me a basket of ferns this morning, and we walked down Chestnut Street. The Marquise says that if you're seen on the fashionable side of Chestnut street at eleven in the morning with a man, people are justified in saying that you are engaged. Is that an American custom?"

"I don't know," said Katharine, listlessly. She did not belong in this comfortable carriage; she wanted to be in her place among those who walked.

"He showed me some gorgeous things at the jewellers; he must be enormously rich; and he seems generous. Do you know I think we shall get along quite well!"

"But about religion?" asked Katharine. "You know Mr. Percival is at present an Agnostic."

A shade crossed the Lady Alicia's face.

"We shall let each other alone, my dear."

Katharine sighed.

"Here we are at the Colonnade, Biddy. I shall get out. Let me kiss you. Good-bye—good-bye! I am going out of your world."

The Lady Alicia looked at her face, and held tight to her gown.

"What is the matter, Kitty? What do you mean? You are not well."

"Oh, yes, I am. But I want to say good-bye. To-morrow I will be no longer of your class: I shall work for my living; I shall be only Katharine O'Conor the worker—"

"What *do* you mean?" cried Biddy, in genuine alarm. "You *shall* stay with me until I make sure that you are not crazy. Is your uncle ruined? Has his house burned down? Has your aunt been nasty to you? Drive on, John!—drive on."

Katharine sank back in the seat.

"My aunt,—you may as well know the truth, Biddy,—has followed what she believes to be the code of society, and arranged a marriage of reason for me with Lord Marchmont."

"He's a scoundrel!" cried Lady Alicia. "You can't marry him—though, I must confess, he has prospects. He may be a duke some day when everybody in the way dies. He is a scoundrel," said the Lady Alicia, with less energy, "but he belongs to a great family, and, from the American point of view, you might do worse."

Katharine flashed a scornful glance at her friend.

"From to-day I shall work for my bread. And, rather than marry that man or any man for mere worldly motives, I would—"

"Be an old maid," interrupted Biddy with a laugh.

"Yes," said Katharine, "I see no disgrace in that. It requires a very superior woman to be an old maid, without regrets and without bitterness. Besides, this life is not all. And, Biddy, I think it would be better for you to work, as I shall do, rather than marry a man so opposite to you in religion as Mr. Wirt Percival."

"Nonsense!" said Biddy. "He saves me from dependence; he gives me a carriage, diamonds, his city house, his country house—my papa will respect me now. A question of religion is nothing in marriage. He will have to keep his Agnosticism in the background. I'm more afraid of his American ways and prejudices. I admit that I don't care about him—but he's not half bad; he likes my title, and I'll keep the whip hand."

Katharine shook her head.

"I shall send you my address as soon as I get work—to-night I shall stay at the hotel."

Biddy protested, implored, entreated; she begged Katharine to go home, to visit her at the Worth's, to ask Mrs. Percival to take her in.

"No," Katharine said, "I must work."

The Lady Alicia shuddered.

"I would rather die than do what you are about to do."

"And I—" Katharine began, but she mercifully suppressed the words.

Katharine listened to all the arguments of her friend unmoved. The Lady Alicia had settled herself in the carriage after a call during which she had heard Katharine praised and envied, and was about to give the coachman another order when a twisted slip of paper was thrown into her lap. She saw no one near the carriage window.

"Insolence!" she said.

The color left her cheeks as she read it.

"I repeat that you had better heed my warning. The man to whom you are engaged has no right to marry. J. M."

"If Wirt Percival has tried to cheat me—" began the Lady Alicia, her nostrils dilating.

Katharine took the paper.

"See—it is addressed to me," she said.

"But people think that you are engaged to him—the papers have said so. The words point to him," said the Lady Alicia, angrily. "I will discover what it means."

In spite of her preoccupation and distress, she went into the hotel, and, announcing her name to the clerk, saw Katharine installed in a good room, but with protests.

CHAPTER XXII.

Jane Mavrick.

KATHARINE was alone with her thoughts at last. The best part of the day had gone; a soft glow filled the room, which was well appointed, but unhomelike. Her trunk and bag had been brought up to her; relieved as she was—safe as she felt when she had turned the key in the lock, she sat on her trunk and began to cry. But, after all, it was a blessed thing to be alone. If one could lock the world out from even the smallest room, one need not be unhappy! She resolved to wait a little while and then to seek out the working girl she had seen at the dressmaker's—the one whose place she had taken for a few moments, much to her aunt's disgust. That girl had a gentle and honest face; from her she could get the address of a lodging house where she could live while she looked about for work. She waited until she heard five o'clock strike, then she went into the street; stopping only for a prayer at St. John's, she went directly to the establishment of the fashionable importer of "robes et manteaux."

The place was not far from the hotel. It was a private house, with no sign of business about it, except the French words in gilded letters on a black background. A polite attendant opened the door, and brought a chair for her.

"You are Miss O'Conor?" he said. "Madame will be disengaged in a moment."

"She need not disturb herself," Katharine said. "I came to see one of the young women here—ah, there she is! Will you ask her to come here?"

The girl, who saw Katharine, came forward at once, and the attendant, after a glance at the famous beauty—as Katharine had come to be regarded even in the suburbs of society—went back to surmise that there was going to be a row—for why should Mrs. Sherwood's niece want to see any girl in the shop, except to scold her for some mistake or other?"

The girl's face flushed as she saw Katharine; she seemed startled for an instant, and then she went forward with a smile.

Katharine rose from her seat as the girl approached her. Another view convinced Katharine that she might hurt her.

"I am going to ask a favor," Katharine said, in a low voice, "and I hope that you are able to grant it."

"I am at your service. I am sure Madame will permit me to do anything that Miss O'Conor requires."

"Oh, Madame has nothing to do with this! I want to find a comfortable place to live, among people who work—I am to be a working girl myself, and I fancy Madame will not care for my opinions then," Katharine added with a smile.

The girl looked puzzled; she raised her soft, brown eyes to Katharine's face inquiringly. For the first time Katharine felt that there might be some difficulties in the way of her project, on which she had not calculated. But she could not turn back now, and, as a vision of her aunt and Lord Marchmont floated before her eyes, she determined that she would not if she could.

"I am anxious to earn my own living—but, first, I must find a room in some respectable place, among nice, quiet people."

"To earn your own living!" exclaimed the girl, "if you knew how hard it is, I guess you would hesitate. Is it for fun?"

"No," said Katharine, solemnly, "no, it is for earnest. But I must not detain you; will you call for me at the Colonnade Hotel on your way home?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you," said Katharine, "and now I may say that the last frock Madame made for me was a trifle tight on the right shoulder. You may tell her that."

The girl nodded, and walked with her to the door.

Out in the street, Katharine felt oppressed. After all, the world was, perhaps, harder than she expected.

Would she be able to hold her own? The dusk began to fall; there was a cold chill in the air; people were beginning to hurry homeward. Each of them, she reflected, had an occupation. Why should there not be a place for her?

But she could not shake off the depression. A cloud was over her. She hurried up to her room and ordered a cup of tea. She did not light the gas, but sat in the semi-gloom until the boy appeared with the tray. She sat in the dusk drinking her tea, and listening to the noise of the city. This was very different from the ceremony of five o'clock tea at her aunt's—very different from an atmosphere of perfume, and the glow of the fire and the shaded lamps —very different from the feeling of security and leisure which permeated the air of the houses she had visited at this hour. Somewhat earlier, she had enjoyed the sense of being alone; now she longed for the young girl to enter; it was not pleasant to be alone at dusk, with nothing to contemplate but a vague future.

At the convent, the bell for supper would soon ring, and then everybody was busy with many interests and plans, in which she, who had been so much of the life there, had now no part. Did dear old friends ever think of her? In a little while, her aunt would come home to dinner and find her note. Would she come after her, to storm and rage? Katharine did not care much—better this unhomelike room, and the solitary cup of tea, than life with Mrs. Sher-

wood and the sacrifice of principle! Her heart no longer bounded at the thought of meeting the difficulties of life; she was oppressed by sad forebodings. She reflected that she had good health, she had energy, she wanted to work, and, with Father Faber, believed that:

"Right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

But, as the lights appeared on the opposite side of the street, and the darkness deepened, Katharine was seized with an unreasonable panic. The mood appalled her. Perhaps it would have been well to have married Wirt Percival. He would have been kind—many girls married outside the church. Alone in the darkness she thought this over. He was rich and respected; he could have given her everything that the world admires—except sympathy in that most essential of all things, religion. Of love she had been told little at the convent, and the novels she had read were few; but Mother Ursula, who spoke often to the young girls on the practical duties of life, had insisted on perfect respect and sympathy in marriage. How could she partake of the great Sacrament of Matrimony with one who did not believe it to be a sacrament? How could she respect one who denied the divinity of Christ—her All in all? And there was Lord Marchmont, an avowed Agnostic, keener and cleverer than

Percival, but from whom she shrank with a woman's intuition that surpasses all logic! No; not even to save herself from death in the right, from the terrors of an unknown future, would she marry Lord Marchmont! The uncertain future was better than that. She knelt and said her beads, bathed her face, on which the tears had stood—for a young girl has a great capacity for self-pity—turned up the gas, rung for some more tea and bread, and began to bustle about in preparation for the coming of the young woman from the shop. There was a grate in the room, and she had a fire made. Things took a more cheerful look. She would never look back again; her face must be set forward.

A bell boy came up to announce that a lady wanted to see Miss O'Conor. Katharine asked that she should be shown up to the room. After a short time she heard the click of the elevator, which was near her room, and she opened her door. She stretched out both hands to welcome the girl, who entered rather timidly.

"Why, it is raining," Katharine said, "your coat is wet!"

"Just a little," said the new-comer, "I ran very fast—between the drops."

"And had you no umbrella?"

"I broke mine in getting off a car the other day," the girl said simply, "and I'm afraid I can't get it mended—it was too far gone."

The girl resisted a little Katharine's attempt to take off her wet coat, while Katharine wondered why she did not buy another umbrella, if her's was broken. Soon she was made comfortable, in spite of herself. Her pale face assumed a glow, and her brown eyes lost their tired look. She drank her tea with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Oh, how cheerful this is!" she said.

"Cheerful?" said Katharine, dubiously.

"If you knew what it is to stand on your feet from eight o'clock in the morning until half-past six at night, you would find how restful this is! I am always so glad to get home. And you are very kind. Madame kept us a half hour later to-night."

Katharine watched her enjoying the tea, the light and the warmth.

"You are very kind," she said, putting down her cup. "I am afraid that they will worry about me at home, but I shall get down more easily, for at this hour the car is not so crowded."

"Who will worry about you?"

"My sister and John — John is my small brother."

"You will forgive me for detaining you—but I will see you part of the way home, if you like—"

"Oh, no!" said the girl, "I am used to it, and you would be obliged to go back alone. You were so kind to me that I should be ungrateful not to be anxious to oblige you."

"I am anxious to find a room, with meals, if possible, in a quiet place, as I told you, and I can not afford to pay much for it. You are surprised that I am poor? But I am. I liked your face; you seemed to me like a good and gentle girl, and I thought I would go to you for advice. I am to be a working girl like you."

"It will be very hard."

"Everything is hard in this world—unless we learn to do it for the love of God."

The girl sighed.

"I know that well." She paused, and then spoke with heightened color. "You must forgive me for speaking very plainly. I know," she added, with a quick glance at Katharine's face, "that one had better die than do wrong. But, if one can keep one's self-respect at all and also have leisure and comfort, it is best to bear some crosses. It is indeed! I am so tired on Saturday, after the week's work, that I can scarcely get strength enough to go out to confession, when the first Sunday of the month comes. Besides, Miss O'Conor, you do not know what poverty means; it means care and fear and anxiety; it means dependence; it means the endurance of slights and the feeling of inferiority."

"I should not mind," said Katharine, wondering at the girl's choice of words; she was certainly not uneducated.

"Ah, you don't know! You will have to think twice before buying an extra loaf of bread, and that

will be very hard for you who can afford to buy flowers like that. They are lovely!" said the girl, looking at the roses.

"You may take them home!" said Katharine, putting them in the girl's lap. "You will please me very much!"

The girl's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, they *are* lovely! We grow flowers in our yard in the summer, but I have never had roses like these. You must pardon me for speaking frankly —I can only show you what poverty means by speaking of myself. I awake every day with the fear that I may get sick. My sister at present can do little to earn money, and my brother must not leave school yet, and so, if I fall sick, the support of the whole of us ceases. You who buy your gowns at Madame's, and only ask who made them in Paris and care very little about the price, will find it dreadful to have to make an old dress last years—yes, years. It would not be so hard if I had not a debt to pay. Our house is mortgaged, and I should like to call it our own, but I can scarcely pay the interest. How will you bear the strain of working from day to day, all the year round, to find you have nothing that you can call your own? Sometimes I fear that my sister will lose her mind—she gets so blue thinking of the desert of unrewarded work I am going through, and she so helpless."

"Is she ill?"

"Ill and unhappy!"

"I should not be unhappy if I had a sister's love," said Katharine, gravely.

"Ah, you don't know," said the girl, shaking her head. "You are running away from—you have been disappointed—but if you knew how helpless the poor are, and how despondent they are—that is, if they *think*, you would pause before you leap from the height of luxury and appreciation to a depth where life is—oh, so different. Not that I have known a life very different from my present life—but I can imagine it."

Katharine did not speak at once. She looked at the girl thoughtfully; she saw a sweet and gentle face, too thin about the temples, and with dark brown hair, waving a little over the low broad brow, with a straight line of care or sorrow bisecting it—a young girl, but with a look as if she might suddenly become old. Her simple brown cloth dress was neat and carefully kept. Her face lost its tenseness as she sipped the tea, and enjoyed the warm fire and the scent of the roses. For a moment, she seemed to forget Katharine, who reflected that, at least, it was something to be able to give this tired being a little rest. But the girl roused herself.

"I must go," she said.

"But, first, will you find a boarding-house for me?"

"I shall try; if you—" a sudden glow of hope lighted up the girl's face, and then it disappeared.

A vague likeness in it to somebody she had seen before struck Katharine—who was it?

"If—" said Katharine.

"But we are too poor to take you into our house," said the girl.

"I am poor—I want to live among the poor—is there a Catholic Church near your house?"

"Oh, yes, there are two very near!"

"If you have room, I shall live with you. And I fancy," added Katharine, with a confident smile, "that I shall be able to help you."

The girl's face brightened.

"It will be a great help to us to have somebody take our spare room. But if you knew—Oh, nobody can ever make us happy again."

"Our Lord—"

"By a miracle—a miracle!" said the girl, hastily. "There are even worse things than penury. To bear a broken heart in one's breast—to have the light taken from one's life—to be despised by those we loved!" the girl went on, vehemently.

Katharine listened in amazement, but with interest.

"When will you come to see our house?" the girl said, remembering herself. "I must go!"

"To-morrow, in the morning."

"Goodbye—thank you—thank you!" She shook Katharine's hand, took the roses, and, throwing her coat over her arm, went towards the door. Katharine saw that she rose thus hastily to hide

her tears. She looked at the card which had been left on the table; she read the words written in pencil:

"Jane Mavrick, care of Mrs. Cayre." And then followed the addresses that had appeared in the two mysterious notes.

CHAPTER XXIII.

At Mrs. Cayre's.

KATHARINE read the address over and over again. It was in the handwriting of the notes she had previously received. There was no doubt of that—"Jane Mavrick, care of Mrs. Cayre." On the back of the card were the directions for finding the house. It was far down town. Katharine saw that she must take two lines of street cars to reach it.

What was in store for her? What would this lead to? If Katharine had been a sentimental girl she would have constructed a strange romance upon this and sought high and low for a confidant. The white satin heroine in the old sentimental plays always had a confidant in white muslin, and the sentimental woman in our times finds great happiness when she is unhappy by pouring forth her tale into sympathetic ears. But Katharine was not sentimental. Mother Ursula had not let her feast on all sorts of novels and had discouraged day dreams; consequently she was without silly conceit or self-consciousness. It must be admitted that if she had been a different kind of young woman, she might have had some reason to believe that she was

specially marked out for special favor. Had she not been made a belle on her first entrance into society? Had not the most sought after man in town proposed to her? And was not a Lord—truly only a Lord by courtesy—waiting for her now?

But Katharine saw nothing remarkable in all this. She was not a remarkably brilliant girl; she was only a naturally good girl, perfectly trained to see clearly right from wrong and not to put undue value on earthly things.

At funerals sometimes when the priests speak about the worthlessness of earthly gain, the onlookers say to themselves, "Ah, if he had not paid attention to money-getting, he would not have silver handles on his coffin." But Katharine would not have cared for the silver handles; she saw with a straight simplicity beyond. She was simply the result of the teaching of the nuns, who had voluntarily chosen the Lady Poverty as their mistress.

On the morning of the next day, she went out to Mass, and then breakfasted in her room. Would her aunt come? Well, if she did, there was only one condition for a return to Kenwood—Lord Marchmont must not be mentioned. But her aunt did not come; a telegram did:

"Come back at once or you shall never come back. A sensation or even a scandal will not frighten me."

Katharine tore up the paper. She could see that her aunt thought she had run away, to make a sen-

sation. She took the Chestnut Street car and rode toward the river. It was a bright morning and she enjoyed the drive.

She changed cars and went down another street—down through a neighborhood whose horrible squalor appalled her. She shrunk back in horror; she had never seen anything like this. Early as it was, dishevelled women, white and black, sat on the low doorsteps or lounged about the damp and dirty pavements, and groups of all ages, men, women and children, mostly black, were gathered about stands, where oysters and crabs were sold. There were strange smells, and the car was obliged to stop in order that a wretched woman, scolding and mad with drink, could be conveyed from one side of the street to the other.

Katharine had never seen this sort of poverty, poverty and laziness, and sin—poverty the result of self-indulgence. Farther down and farther down, she drove, until she came almost in sight of green fields. Then the conductor told her that she had reached her destination. The houses for many squares had pleased her by their neatness and cleanliness, but rather wearied her by their monotony. Red brick and white paint seemed to stretch for miles—brick scrupulously red and paint scrupulously white. Everybody visible seemed to be engaged in cleaning the front of their houses. Some of the houses were fine and handsome, but all without one patch of green in front of them—or, when there was

a patch of green, it was banked in by two other houses. This struck Katharine as sad. A world without patches of green had no attraction for her. Not a flower or a shrub in all this vast expanse of brick walls—not a half acre in which little children could play. It is true, she saw some digging in the gutters, and she longed to take them out to Kenwood and to give them the run of the garden.

The number on the slip of paper led her to a dazzlingly red and white house, two stories in height, with a slanting roof, and an attic beneath it. She walked up the three snowy stone steps, and pulled a dazzlingly brilliant bell-handle.

A woman answered—a rather tall woman, neatly dressed in a gown of calico; Katharine's quick glance read that she had once been beautiful, that she would be beautiful now, were it not for the lack of color and the careworn look of the face. Hair of a peculiar light color, between brown and a grayish tint, was knotted at the back of the head. There was such a wealth of it; it escaped in a hundred tendrils about her neck; and it was the first feature that struck Katharine in the woman before her. Katharine had no need to tell her name. The woman's face changed at sight of her; it had been cold, white, almost stern; it suddenly took on another look. A smile made her face sunny for a moment.

"You are Miss O'Conor?"

"And you—and you?" began Katharine, standing in the boxlike hall and gazing earnestly at the

young woman. This was the face she had seen at the carriage window, and she had seen it before that —somewhere—but where?

"Oh, I am Mrs. Cayre—Jenny Mavrick's sister," said the woman heartily, as she led the way into a little cheery room.

Beyond, Katharine could see the kitchen. There was a glimmer of sunlight through yellow shades there, on tin and silver. The dining-room was not so bright; it was by comparison in semi-gloom; but Katharine could make out an engraving of Murillo's Immaculate Conception over the lounge, and see that the paper was of a soft and tasteful color. A table covered by a red cloth, stood near the window, on the sill of which a geranium upheld early clusters against a dainty white curtain.

A crimson curtain separated this dining-room from another apartment, which was doubtless the parlor. Katharine took the chair which Mrs. Cayre offered with grace and kindliness.

"Your sister has told you that I need a room."

"Yes," answered the woman, "and I hope you will like it here. It is far down town, but then the cars are so convenient. And if you write books, you know, it will not make much difference where you live."

"Write books!" said Katharine in amazement. "Why, if I write a letter, it is a great acquirement for me! Who could have told you that?"

"Perhaps I must have misunderstood after all. I think Jenny merely said you seemed clever enough to write books."

"Jenny is kind," said Katharine, smiling. She looked into the bluish gray eyes of the woman; they were honest, merry eyes, with neither flattery nor satire in them.

"I shall look out for music pupils."

"We are very poor, you know—and I do all the work myself; perhaps our ways will not suit you, though I should like to have you."

There was a cordial light in Mrs. Cayre's eyes; and Katharine wondered why she should show so much interest.

"I am poor, too," said Katharine, "and I want to learn how to live within my means, and I hope you may teach me—how pretty your picture is—and everything seems nice—you don't seem to be poor at all!"

"But we are," said Mrs. Cayre, "and it takes great planning to keep everything so neat, and I flatter myself it is neat. In the summer we have a very pretty yard. I hope you like flowers."

"Indeed I do! But, if you will show me the room—"

Mrs. Cayre rose, and led the way up a narrow staircase. She ushered Katharine into a square room smelling of lavender. The paper on the walls was white, with pink garlands of rosebuds scattered over it; the counterpane on the bed was similarly deco-

rated; the bureau and its glass were almost entirely draped with white muslin and pale pink ribbon. On the mantel-piece stood an image of the Blessed Virgin —a cheap plaster image, but in front of it were a few geraniums and a sprig of mignonette. The floor was painted white, a thick rug of artistically woven rags lying in front of the bed.

"It is very pretty!"

Mrs. Cayre's face, which had worn a look of great anxiety, smiled.

"I arranged it myself—I painted the counterpane when I was too ill to do anything else, and, when I got better, I put those roses on the wall. It was a tedious job, but I did my best."

"And you succeeded!" cried Katharine, warmly. "They are La France roses, too. How I love them!"

She noticed that the roses she had given Jenny the night before were grouped before a small metal crucifix on the bureau. The room was small; it would probably be hot in summer, and cold in winter, in spite of the little stove in it. But, as Katharine reflected, she was poor, and she must put up with some discomforts. There was a bath-room over the kitchen. Mrs. Cayre and her sister occupied the attic, and the back room could be rented by Katharine, too, if she wanted it. The terms seemed low to Katharine; she paid a month in advance, and then re-examined the room with interest and a feeling of possession. She observed two little blue shoes on the bureau, half-hidden by the roses.

She picked them up; they had been worn; the marks of the little toes were visible and the heel in one was worn. Katharine involuntarily kissed them; she loved little children even better than flowers.

She turned, to see tears in her companion's eyes.

"Whose are these?" she asked.

"Yours," whispered the woman, in a broken voice. "Don't you remember? Oh, do not speak to me—do not speak to me! I can never feel joy again! And yet you alone make it possible."

Katharine put down the shoes gently among the flowers. She turned again to the woman. Was she mad? After all, perhaps it was unsafe to take this room in the house of an unknown person. The woman covered her face with her hands.

"Ah, Miss O'Conor, I should be in despair if it were not for you. You gave me hope. You could not save my little one's life, but you saved its soul. It is now among those who are in the full presence of God."

Katharine was puzzled. The woman was sincere; her sobs attested that. A light broke upon her; she recalled the journey with Mr. and Mrs. Percival from the convent of Our Lady of the Rosary, and the scene of the Baptism. So this was the mother! Now she knew where she had seen the face. No wonder that she had been ill, no wonder that she looked careworn.

"Ah, I remember," said Katharine, "and I thank God that He gave me the sweet privilege of helping

that little child to its place near the Divine Infant. Surely it was a great privilege! And you have lost your husband, too—poor dear!"

And Katharine kissed her. Mrs. Cayre's face hardened.

"My husband?—Oh, yes," she said, "I lost him."

There was silence. The softness and tenderness of the moment before had gone. There was a chill in the air. Mrs. Cayre averted her face from Katharine, who went to the window to look at the dreary row of brick houses opposite. How strange life seemed, how small the world! And how helpfulness for one another makes hidden, golden chains through it all! These thoughts ran through Katharine's mind, though she was not given to such reflections.

"I will come this afternoon," Katharine said. Mrs. Cayre silently led her downstairs; there, with a certain pride, she drew aside the crimson curtains and showed the parlor, a small, square room in semi-gloom, for the shutters were closed. There were prettily draped chairs, a small, old-fashioned piano, a rug on the painted floor, and a few drawings on the wall. Evidently people could be refined, even if they were poor; she had a peculiar satisfaction in the thought.

She gave her hand to Mrs. Cayre, at the door.

"You will be back to tea?" asked the latter, wistfully.

"Oh, yes," said Katharine, "if it is convenient."

"Jenny will be happy," answered Mrs. Cayre, "she has so few friends of her own age, and she wants to like you, if you will let her, though your positions are so different."

Katharine smiled. "I don't see that; we must both work and I am glad she likes me." She paused; would it be well to ask about the notes.

Perhaps Mrs. Cayre divined her thought. As they waited on the step for the car to come—Katharine had gone through a cross street to reach the the lawn—the woman said, timidly:

"Will you let me ask a question?"

"Willingly," said Katharine.

"Are you engaged to be married—the papers say—"

"I am not engaged to be married, and I never have been!" said Katharine, decidedly.

"Thank Heaven!" said Mrs. Carey; and she said to herself: "Now I can keep my secret."

Katharine's car came; she was glad to let the affair of the notes alone. What difference did it make now?

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Question of Spelling.

"NO," Katharine said, "no." She stood, facing Mrs. Percival in her room at the hotel; she spoke firmly yet in that low tone which the careful cultivation of the nuns had given to her voice; and consequently Katharine's "no" was deprived of all offence in Mrs. Percival's ears, for Mrs. Percival could forgive almost anything that was not ill-bred.

"My dear," Mrs. Percival urged, "you are doing a most foolish thing. You are throwing yourself away. You are rushing into poverty. I admit that your aunt is a scheming, designing, underbred woman, but—"

"No word against my aunt, please, dear Mrs. Percival," said Katharine, "she is my uncle's wife, and she has been kind to me. I am grateful for your offer—I am indeed, but I cannot accept it."

"Why not?" Mrs. Percival leaned back in the large easy chair, which gave the hotel room an unusual air of luxuriousness. "Why not? Mr. Percival likes you; I like you. You have only to come to us. The arrangement can easily be made with your aunt, and the thing done very quietly."

"It is very kind, Mrs. Percival," Katharine answered. "I may say that, except my uncle, I like you and Mr. Percival better than anybody I have met—in the world. And I am sure that I might learn to like you almost as well as Mother Ursula and the Sisters, if I knew you better. But how could I live on your bounty? I have a sort of claim on my uncle because he is my uncle. But how could I live in idleness, supported by Mr. Percival. It would not do."

"Idleness!" exclaimed Mrs. Percival. "What nonsense! you could answer my notes, arrange the flowers for dinner, see people when I am tired. Idleness!—why, Katharine, Mr. Percival would keep you singing to him."

"No," repeated Katharine. "It is better that I should break loose from this kind of life. It is artificial; it does not do me any good; I was never intended for a 'society girl'—never!"

"Why don't you go into a convent, then," said Mrs. Percival, shortly.

"I have no vocation—I wish I had. I thought that you would be one of the last people in the world to forget that the religious life requires a very special vocation."

"Perhaps I have forgotten it," said Mrs. Percival with a sigh. "I fear that this continual rush and bustle rubs the bloom off one's religious impressions."

"I am afraid of that," said Katharine, eagerly. "It is really—"

"Oh, don't preach," interrupted Mrs. Percival, petulantly; "I hate preaching from young girls. How can you defend yourself? How can you explain your going off in this way? It will be hard enough to cover up your running off from your aunt's house without a chaperon as it is. You know very well that of late a chaperon is an absolute necessity. It's only to save you from your own imprudence that I have come after you now."

"I am grateful," answered Katharine, "very grateful. I can understand that a chaperon is a desirable thing in your set, but a working girl can not afford a chaperon, and I prefer to be a working girl rather than a dependent. Let me go on—please! Suppose I lived with you in luxury—a time would come when I should have to look out for myself—and then I should be unprepared for it. I know I am poor, and I accept the fact. My father came to this country and he accepted the fact, and did what he could. And I am willing to do as he did. Mrs. Percival, I will *not* be married for my uncle's money. And I am afraid of this life of 'society;' I might become—"

"Like me—say it out, Katharine—you mean it."

Katharine turned away; she had not intended to say it. Mrs. Percival was silent for a time.

"There is not a girl in society who does not envy your opportunities—and yet you throw them away."

"Would you have me marry Lord Marchmont?"

"And perhaps be a Duchess some day."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Percival—good-bye," Katharine said, kissing her. "If," she added, timidly, "you are ever ill and need me, you will find me a capital nurse—"

"Oh," said Mrs. Percival, impatiently, "I am never ill. Good-bye. But you have disappointed me, Katharine O'Conor. And I am sure Mr. Percival will be disappointed."

She went away. Katharine sat on the bed and cried. It was hardest of all to know that Mr. Perval would be disappointed. Again she weighed the two lives before her, and again she felt sure that the artificial life as she saw it in society would not suit her. She panted for fresh waters, she wanted to be free to live according to God's will. And then the doubt arose—was it God's will that she should go out into the world, from riches to poverty? She called to mind that our Lord was poor; she thought of the little house down town and of Mrs. Cayre's face. She wiped her eyes and felt comforted. After all, to stay at her uncle's would mean to struggle continually against her aunt's will and perhaps to make a breech between her uncle and aunt; and she felt sure that to take up her residence at Mrs. Percival's, after leaving her uncle's house, would seem a great offence in his eyes.

She strapped her trunk and rang for the porter. Just as the trunk had disappeared, the Lady Alicia entered the room; she was attired in her rough serge suit and thick walking shoes, and a large blue veil

did not add to the elegance of her appearance. She threw back her veil, and Katharine observed that she was pale and anxious-looking.

"So you are actually going to play the fool, Kitty —you are really in earnest in doing this Donna Quixota act!" Biddy said, sharply.

Katharine's color rose, but she restrained the words that rose to her lips.

"Cervantes made Don Quixote a very noble gentleman, if I remember," she said with a smile.

"And so you will give up the best things in life for a whim!"

"If the best things in life are riches and luxury, I am willing to give them up. If they are the best things in life, our Lord lived in vain," Katharine said with spirit.

"Is this the talk of a convent girl?" said the Lady Alicia, with sarcasm.

"I don't know what your convent girls are taught, but we are taught here in America that the best things under Heaven are not money and luxuries. We are not taught that to marry for these things is the sole duty of women."

Katharine's temper was rising. Biddy changed color; she had a temper, too.

"Do you mean that for me, Kitty O'Conor?"

"Perhaps I did mean it for you," said Katharine, hastily. "Biddy, I don't want to quarrel. You will never understand me, so what's the use of talking."

The Lady Alicia went to the window and drummed on the pane with her fingers. Katharine held the door-knob in her hand; she was anxious to be gone.

"Do you think Wirt Percival could deceive me in any way? Do you think that there is any truth in that note?"

Katharine turned in amazement.

"You don't mean to say that you have such a doubt of the man you promised to marry? Oh, Biddy!"

The Lady Alicia raised her eyeglass, with an attempt at insolence. Kitty O'Conor was a nice girl, no doubt, but she might go too far. The eyeglass dropped; Katharine was not at all subdued.

"I do distrust Mr. Percival," she said, after an uneasy pause. "You Americans have such lax ideas about marriage and divorce—and the man has no religion. He may be a Mormon for all I know—Americans are so queer."

Katharine put her hand on the knob again; she was disgusted.

"I might have known that you wouldn't let such a prize escape you, if there wasn't something wrong about him."

"Good-bye," said Katharine, opening the door.

"Stop!" cried the Lady Alicia, "I am wretched, Kitty—can't you see it? I can't ask this man whether he is divorced or not—and they say in Dublin that half America *is* divorced—and I

haven't any mother to do it. Don't you see how wretched I am? If he were a Catholic, I should be safe—but, as it is, I am not at all sure. At home everybody knows everybody, and one is pretty safe. But here—Oh, don't you see how wretched I am?"

"Very wretched," said Katharine, "to think of marrying a man whom you distrust. I can't imagine anybody more wretched."

The Lady Alicia rose angrily.

"What am I to do? I can't marry at home unless I go down in the social scale. I haven't any money, and nobody at home in our set would marry me without a *dot*. You ought to know that. What am I to do?"

Biddy intended this question to be pathetic. But Katharine did not understand it that way.

"Work," she said.

"Work?" repeated the Lady Alicia, sarcastically. "Work! Starve, be a pauper, live a pauper, die a pauper! What can I work at? One of your newspaper men offered me a lot of money for a series of articles on 'How They Act in English Society.' I shall do that, and help pay for my trousseau. It won't last long, though, and I fancy that, when the man sees how I write, he'll be tired of his bargain. I can't even teach you American girls deportment—you've already more style than the Parisians! But don't let us quarrel, as you said. I *must* marry Percival."

"It is worse than death. He does not believe in Christianity even; and for that reason you do not trust him. Biddy, I cannot understand you. For what our religion teaches us is like a mere passing breath, you are willing to sacrifice what is really best in life—Faith and Peace."

Biddy went up to Katharine and put her arms about her. Katharine felt a tear fall on her hand.

"I wish I had never met you!" she said, passionately. "Nobody ever talked that way to me before. People said, 'Marry for love,' but nobody that I knew could afford to marry for love, and of course the sentimental novels are all nonsense; but we never thought of religion, and yet now I begin to see that religion ought to have something to do with marriage. One can't trust a man in this country, where even the best people don't seem to believe in this country. It is Paganism! You Americans are utterly unscrupulous!"

Katharine could not help smiling—she could not tell why. There was an artless worldliness in the Lady Alicia's point of view which was amusing. Instantly, however, Katharine saw again the miserable side of the affair.

"Wirt Percival is no doubt a gentleman," she said, "I imagine that he would never break a promise he had made. But, Biddy, think of a life spent with a husband whose God is not your God—who will grow year by year more and more apart from you."

"I'm not thinking of the sentimental side; but, Kitty, I have only a short time to stay in the country. It must be Wirt Percival or nobody."

"Let it be nobody, then."

"That is impossible."

Katharine drew away from her friend.

"Good-bye," she said, "I am afraid I shall never see you again; but I will pray for you, Biddy."

"Help me to find out what that note means."

Katharine looked thoughtful.

"I will—and I think I can. Mrs. Cayre is Jenny Mavrick's sister; she knows. Biddy," cried Katharine, as a new light flashed into her mind, "I have it now! Mrs. Cayre is not the wife of Wirt Percival, but of Ferdinand Carey—*Cayre* is Carey—don't you see?"

The Lady Alicia stared. Slowly she was made to understand what Katharine meant.

"Thank you, Kitty," she said; "I believe you are right. The paragraphers—particularly the one that writes in that nasty New York paper—had you engaged to this Carey. Yes, you are right! I am awfully relieved!"

"Good-bye," Katharine said, "I must go. If you have distrusted Wirt Percival once, what guarantee have you that you will not distrust him again?"

Katharine hastily left the room. The Lady Alicia looked after her wistfully, and then went down stairs slowly, with a thoughtful look on her face.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Wrecked Life.

KATHARINE felt that she had solved the mystery of the notes by a sudden flash of that intuition which is every sane woman's birthright. Jenny Mavrick's sister was Mrs. Carey, and Mrs. Carey and the woman whose child she had baptized were one. When she had time to think it all over in the car going down town, she was amazed that both the Lady Alicia and herself had taken it so coolly. It seemed impossible—impossible that Ferdinand Carey could have married a woman like Jenny Mavrick's sister. He was fastidious — almost snobbish, she had heard his friends say, in his regard for social standing. And yet there was a mystery about him; he had hinted of a sad past. Katharine recalled the face of Mrs. Cayre and her look of suffering. How could it have happened? Jenny Mavrick was a worker among the workers; and her sister was of the same class, while Ferdinand Carey was of another class entirely. How wretched it was, Katharine thought. And then as she thought of Biddy and Wirt Percival, her heart went out to her friend, and she shud-

dered. Marriage without trust, marriage without the truest harmony in the most essential of all things—religion—meant to her unmitigated misery and regret.

It was growing dark when she reached the little house down town. A cheerful light shone in the parlor, and Mrs. Cayre, looking less sad and spiritless than in the morning, received her warmly. She looked up into Katharine's face shyly and then kissed her. Katharine was surprised and pleased by this demonstration.

"It is good to have you here—good to see you here. Ah, suppose Baby had died without baptism!"

The woman gently removed Katharine's wrap and hat, and kissed her again. She found that her room had been made warm and cheerful for her.

She locked the door, and enjoyed for a few moments the agreeable sensation of being alone. She was free at last. Mrs. Sherwood could not interrupt or insist on her going through any fashionable formality now.

She made her plan. She would rest a day or two, and then try to find pupils. And perhaps Herr Teufelfisch might be induced to help her to a place as a concert singer. She had hope, and there was work before her. Providence seemed to have led her into this house—into the house of Ferdinand Carey's wife, and perhaps it might be her mission to reconcile those two whom God had joined,

and who were parted, she felt sure, by the influence of man. The cars rattled past her windows, their jingling bells at first disturbing her meditations. But she became used to it after a time. The room was small, the green blinds on the windows a little faded, but there was an air of neatness and severity about everything such as one finds only in Philadelphia, where even poverty has a distinction of its own, and is seldom the squalid thing found in other cities.

Katharine wrote two long letters to the convent and one of them was to her little friend, Maria Rodrigues, full of sage maxims. In answer to them, there came a few days later, a letter from Mother Ursula full of gentle reproach. Could not Katharine have come back to the convent, if her aunt's house were intolerable. And might not she have endured that house until her uncle could have come home. After all, Mother Ursula said, "obedience was better than sacrifice." What unknown dangers might a young girl meet, venturing alone into a strange city? Mother Ursula counselled her in the end to see the parish priest at once, and to inquire particularly into the character of the people among whom she had fallen.

The other message consisted of an orange skin which enclosed some guava jelly from the little Maria, and a slip of paper on which was written in a large, round hand, "I love you." This message somehow or other gave Katharine a good deal of consolation.

For a few days she saw little of the people of the house, except at meals. They were quiet and soft-spoken and eager to please. Katharine noticed that Mrs. Cayre still possessed great beauty, although a sad and troubled look never left her. When she was not busy arranging her belongings in the room, she wrote letters, and even composed a little song. The only response to a note sent to Mrs. Sherwood was a large trunk containing all her dresses and gloves, with a slip of paper pinned inside the lid, on which her aunt had written :

"Your uncle will never see you again. You are as dead to him."

It gave Katharine a passing pang. But, in a few moments, she regained her composure. She was sure that her uncle had not authorized those words. She called Mrs. Cayre up to her room to show her the finery. The woman's eyes sparkled and she sighed, as Katharine displayed the soft silks and gauzes.

Katharine was surprised.

"I didn't think you had such an interest in these things."

"Ah, it would have made such a difference!" she answered, half to herself. "*He* was fond of such things, and I had never acquired the graces which he liked. Perhaps, if he had seen me once in a dress like that—for I was not always so worn and faded as I am now—"

"He!" asked Katharine, "He! I fancy he could not have been much of a man, if he admired you for

your looks and dress alone! I thought there was more in him than that!"

Katharine, remembering herself, saw Mrs. Cayre start. She took her hands.

"I have guessed who *he* is. Ferdinand Carey is your husband!"

The woman dropped her eyes and then looked in a startled way at Katharine.

"And you knew this, and yet—"

"No," said Katharine, "I did not—I guessed it lately. Besides, you are mistaken—I know what you mean—Mr. Carey was never engaged to me—he is an honorable man. There was a silly rumor in the newspapers about it, but—"

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Cayre, looking young and bright again. "You give me new life; I feared, with his idea about divorce, that he might have sent me adrift. Oh, it can be done, you know—it can be done without a poor woman knowing anything about it—for he is rich, and the laws are all against marriage in this country."

"And yet you married him, knowing that he held marriage as a trifle—as a thing of mere *human* law!"

"No human being can help me," said Mrs. Cayre sadly. "The past is past. And—I love him still."

"It *must* be helped!" said Katharine, with all the decisiveness of hopeful youth. "God works through human means, and He never intended that married people should be separated. Besides, there

must be hope, since Ferdinand Carey himself is so unhappy."

"I wish I could think he was unhappy," said the woman, "and yet I would not cause him pain for all the world. If he were unhappy, there would be hope for me. I hear that he is the gayest of the gay. I read of him among people who would despise me as the dirt beneath their feet. He has wealth, society, pleasure—while I have nothing but bitterness, and the memory of that death."

"Neither wealth nor pleasure makes us happy. Father Mehen told me that you ought to be happy, because you are good."

"Father Mehen is kind; if I try to be good, it is because he keeps me from despair."

Father Mehen was the parish priest, whom Katharine, following Mother Ursula's advice, had seen.

"No," said Mrs. Cayre, burying her face in her hands, "it would be better for me to die. It would release *him*. I know I deserve all this—I brought it on myself; I know that I should never have married. But I can't help suffering; I can't forget him. He is my husband—and you say these stories were false?"

"All false," said Katharine.

"I love him," answered Mrs. Cayre simply.

Katharine did not answer at once; she stood, holding the soft gauze in her hands.

"I cannot understand how you could have loved a man whom you did not respect—a man who could

hold lightly that supreme principle upon which your whole happiness was to rest. I cannot understand it—but, after all, it is not necessary that I should understand it. I want to help you now. I know now why you were so anxious to warn me. I thought that those warnings were pointed at Mr. Wirt Percival."

"I am glad; he has forsaken me; but he is not as base as I thought. Jenny told me how kind you had been to her, and, when rumor coupled your name and his together, I was almost tempted to kill myself. 'I can make them both happy,' I said."

Katharine shuddered.

"How horrible!" she exclaimed.

"Some people would have called it heroic," said Mrs. Cayre. "Ferdinand Carey would, and I thought, 'he will weep over my grave, and think kind thoughts of me.' But I hurried off to the church, and there, before the altar, all those sinful thoughts went away."

Katharine put her arm about the woman's neck.

"You are morbid," she said; then she had to stop and think—a case of this kind was beyond her experience. She was not sentimental, and Mrs. Cayre's proposed sacrifice appeared to her not only foolish, but criminal. The truth is, Katharine had not read the current novels.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," she said, cheerfully, "you stay here and I'll bring up some tea—Oh, yes, I will; you must let me wait on you this time;

you must! Then we'll sit in this quiet room and have a lovely talk. And you'll let me call you Mrs. Carey—"

"No," said the woman, with a frown, "I shall not be called by that name so long as *he* is ashamed of me. Call me Helen, if you will."

"Well, Helen, wait!"

Katharine enjoyed the excitement of running downstairs and making the tea in the little kitchen; besides it gave her time to think. Oh, if Mother Ursula were here! It was such a responsibility to have a human heart in her hands.

When she returned with the tea, she found Helen Carey crying. This pleased her; she believed that tea and tears were sovereign cures for the sorrows of her sex.

She poured out a cup, sat down on the lounge beside her new friend, and said, "Tell me all!"

Helen drank the tea, and, whether it was through the cheering cup or Katharine's presence, she began to brighten.

"There is little to tell," she said. "My sister and I lived on a farm in Ohio. Our parents were dead, and there was just enough left to keep us—and we hadn't made up our minds what we should do yet. People said I was pretty, and I am afraid it made me very idle and capricious. I thought my face was my fortune, and I read novels, while I waited for the Prince. He came to visit Judge

Lambert on the hill one day in summer, and he was—you know who."

Katharine nodded.

"We were Catholics; and he wanted me to drop my religion. But that I stood out against. I must have been very pretty, and clever, too, in a crude sort of way—not like *you*," she said, wistfully, "or like the other girls he knows; but in my own way. He liked me. Even Judge Lambert, my father's old neighbor, spoke to me. He said I could not be happy with a man so different from myself. I didn't mind it much when he talked about opposite religions; but, when he said I was Ferdinand Carey's social inferior, I fired up, and I said that I'd marry him, anyhow. And I did! Well, afterward the baby came; then we quarreled. He stayed in Ohio; and he was always trying to teach me; he wouldn't have the baby christened; so we fought about everything. At last, I demanded to be introduced to his relatives. He refused, unless I would consent to go abroad first, and be made 'presentable.' During all this time, I never thought of religion, except to quarrel about it. One day I took the baby and Jenny, and ran away. He was ashamed of me—he was ashamed of me! and he showed it! Oh, I almost hate him when I think of it. Jenny and I moved from place to place, I, sullen, despairing—and you know what happened. Ah, the dear little baby!" There was silence. "Miss O'Conor, if I were not sure that the sweet, little thing was in

Heaven, I should go raving mad!" she said, in a broken voice.

"She is in Heaven!"

Helen pressed her hand.

"We came here—because I must be near him. We had but little money; I was sick, and Jenny had to work so hard. But, still, we kept together; and to be near him, is joy and torture! I worked, Miss O'Conor, at my looks; I observed people; I tried to correct the defects he noticed; I did my best to restrain my voice, and to think of my manner. Oh, if I could only please him! If he would only be proud of me!"

"He *shall* be proud of you," said Katharine, losing her patience, as she looked at the flushed, anxious face near hers, the eyes soft and luminous, the pale skin flushed. "Oh, what idiots woman are, to care!" she said to herself. "He *shall* be proud of you yet!"

"Ah, no," said Helen, "I am so unworthy of him—I know it. He loved music, and I was so ill-trained, yet I thought myself so clever; and, until I met him I seemed to know so much more than other people. But I would be humble now. If I had only been, I might have won him to me—and to the Church."

Katharine moved impatiently.

"You should never have married him. He is—well, I'll not give my opinion of him. If a man will not see the beauty of our Faith by the light

that each human being receives, no woman can make him see it. Still, you are his wife, and it can't be helped. You must use your tact; don't mope. Dressed well, and looking more cheerful, you'd compare with the handsomest woman he knows."

"Would I?" cried Helen, raising her head. "And, oh, I have worked so hard at my music. I can almost sing well."

"And perhaps I can help you."

"Ah, you can! And perhaps—"

Katharine did not know whether to be pleased or contemptuous at the joy and hope on her face.

"Well, perhaps," she said, kissing her, "now, go and get tea for Jenny."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"The Winter Roses."

HERR TEUFELFISCH next occupied Katharine's thoughts. She had never known the value of money in the necessity of earning it. But, as a girl of common sense, she reflected that her little store of money must come to an end soon, if it were not replenished. She would have been willing in the first flush of her enthusiasm to go to work for nothing. Fortunately, she had no illusions about the measure that her talent was likely to meet with in the world. She had been told that she could sing; but she had been told a great many other things during her experience in society which she knew to be only complimentary. She was sure that Herr Teufelfisch would be honest; Katharine's ambition did not soar above the giving of lessons, in spite of the music master's opinion that they were wretched drudgery. She had Herr Teufelfisch's address; he lived in a narrow street uptown, in a colony of his compatriots—Viennese who followed the Viennese ways.

Katharine rang the bell in a dingy doorway, and a blooming servant maid, in a white cap, made her

appearance. Katharine gave her a card; but the amiable maid merely smiled, muttered: "So?" and showed her into a parlor where Herr Teufelfisch was sitting before a little piano. His hair was more than usually dishevelled, he wore a dingy, reddish dressing gown, he paid no attention to the entrance of Katharine, who had time to notice the tarnished ormolu clock on the mantel, over which hung a portrait of Emperor Francis Joseph, flanked by two long candlesticks. The air of dinginess noticeable on the outside of the house was evident inside. And yet, it was comfortable. If there was a special spot in the wall paper just over the sofa on which Herr Teufelfisch's long pipe reposed, it was because some guest—or perhaps the old musician himself—preferred to rest there. Sheets of music were everywhere scattered over the carpet.

Herr Teufelfisch did not turn his head; he went on drumming on the little piano.

"So?" he said, in a cross voice. "You are late again! You are always late—*spitzbube!*—always late, always! Come in! You shall practice my grand *Polonaise* for two hours for this!"

Katharine laughed.

Herr Teufelfisch turned and scowled ferociously.

"So! So!" he said, jumping up from the piano-stool. "It is you, *gnädiges fraulein.* And I scolded you? I thought it was the little Pickett—the little Pickett is a very clever pupil, but a very lazy one. He is always late—sit down—I beg of you. Wait,

till I take my dear pipe from the sofa. And you will pardon the looks of everything! See! I am a bachelor, and I am not neat."

Katharine sat down, and the old man beamed on her over his spectacles.

"Ach," he said, "you are the same but different. What is it I miss? You have no flowers; you always had flowers? Why have you no flowers?"

Katharine threw back the fur boa about her neck, and laughed.

"Even your laugh is *true*," said the old man. "You could not make a discord, if you would. Ah, you have come to sing for me. The Pickett—sometimes I call him the little Pig—will not come to-day, so that I shall be free during his hour. You will sing? I am afraid you will not like my little piano; it is very old; it was made for the young Duke of Reichstadt, and his mother, the Empress, gave it to my father. But the tone is sweet; and I like it for the singing, though it is nothing to the grand piano I have in the other room. It is tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, but—oh! so sweet! But where are your flowers?"

"I am poor now, Herr Teufelfisch, and I cannot afford to buy flowers," said Katharine. "I must work, and so I came to you!"

"And so you have run away from the amiable Mrs. Sherwood? So! So! I have heard that. You shall sing at my next concert!"

Katharine stood up impulsively, her eyes sparkling.

"Oh, Herr Teufelfisch—you are too kind. I did not expect this. I expected only a pupil or two, like the little Pickett, for instance."

Herr Teufelfisch drew himself up.

"Not the little Pickett—no—he is a genius, but lazy. Only *I* could teach him. But you can sing, and that is not so hard. And you will have fifty dollars for three songs."

Katharine's eyes sparkled.

"That will be lovely!—but—"

"No buts. What will you sing? If I could get a new contralto to go with you." Here he laughed. "You might sing the duo in *Semiramide*—Patti and Scalchi sang it."

"You are making fun of me!"

"Just a little. But Miss O'Conor, what will you sing?"

"I wish I knew," said Katharine, nervously, "will it be in a large hall?"

"No—in a drawing-room."

There was a pause. Katharine wanted to ask where, but she felt that she had no right to make conditions; and even if it should be in some house which she had visited socially, she would have to accept the fact, for the sake of "getting her chance."

"I have a little song in German," said Herr Teufelfisch, "which I should like you to sing; but it is a duo. The contralto is ill, and I know not anyone who could sing it with you as it should be done. Ach, the sisters have trained you well—but

then you have fresh blood in you, and the fresh art of natural musicians. I sang, when I could sing—once at Dublin. Such a reception—such applause! But here is my little song, 'The Winter Roses.'"

"If you will let me take it home—"

"No use," said the music master, "who will sing the second part?"

"I think I can find one," said Katharine, a faint color coming into her cheeks. "I can let you know by to-morrow afternoon."

Herr Teufelfisch looked at her thoughtfully, while she went to the piano and tried both parts of "The Winter Roses."

The soft tinkle of the old piano under her touch took the old man back to a time when his mother had played an air very like that—for the air of the "Winter Roses" was a reminiscence of his childhood.

Katharine ceased playing, and spoke with an accent of distress.

"The air is lovely—but I am afraid the contralto does not know a word of German."

"That is bad," said Herr Teufelfisch, "musicians who do not know German are half blind. You cannot understand German music without knowing German."

Katharine laughed. "But what shall I do?"

"Translate the words."

"I never could write a line of verse."

"And the good sisters did not teach you that, too?" said Herr Teufelfisch, with a twinkle in his eye.

"They could not *make* me a poet," said Katharine. "Oh, dear! I wish I knew somebody who could translate 'The Winter Roses.'"

"Well, take the song with you, and to-morrow bring the song with you. Now sing for me—to-morrow we shall talk—at three o'clock—about your prospects. Ach, how foolish to give up the roses, the luxury and the company of the amiable Mrs. Sherwood for the pleasure of teaching the little Picketts!"

Katharine sang Titania's florid air from *Mignon*, and after that several others. After that, she bade good-bye to the eccentric old master, and went her way, laden with sheets of music.

She was both hopeful and depressed. Soon, however, she forgot herself in a great castle in the air, in which she saw Ferdinand Carey and his wife re-united, both singing, in German, "The Winter Roses." She was aroused from her revery by a voice near her.

"There she is, Walter—God bless her!"

She hurried on, startled for a moment. She did not remember the voice, but it seemed as if she ought to remember it.

"Where?" asked a voice she remembered very well. In another moment a man stood beside her.

"Miss O'Conor!"

She saw Walter Dillon beside her, hat in hand. The sun made his red hair glow and shine, and Katharine was glad to see his honest blue eyes again. But, it must be admitted that the cordiality of her manner was due to the sudden thought that here was a man that perhaps might translate "The Winter Roses."

Near him stood an old woman, smiling gently at her, an old woman in faded black, who held out her hand, carefully gloved, but with many stitches in the gloves that spoke of the pathetic battle between gentility and poverty.

"You have forgotten the old woman to whom you gave the rose at the station?"

"Oh, no," said Katharine, catching the kind light in the old lady's eyes. "I have not forgotten. I am glad the rose gave you pleasure."

"Let me present you to my aunt, Mrs. Warland," said young Dillon. "She has spoken many times of your kindness. She was ill and troubled on that day," he added, "but she shall be troubled no more." And he looked at the gentle looking old woman very affectionately. "She has come to live with me."

"I hope to see her," said Katharine impulsively. "May I give you my address, Mrs. Warland? And, if you will let me, I shall call." Then she paused, somewhat embarassed. If Mrs. Warland lived with her nephew, and was not mistress of the house could she with propriety call? She could not remember what Mrs. Sherwood's invaluable

book on social topics might say to that. Mrs. Warland relieved her.

"I will call, my dear," she said; "for, in truth, I board in one house, and Walter in another; we have no home yet. I will go to your house with Walter."

"Soon, I hope," said Katharine, forgetting her reserve. "Could you come to-night? I am so anxious to have some words translated from the German into English verse, and perhaps Mr. Dillon might be kind enough—"

"I am only an architect," Dillon answered, smiling, "not a poet; but Mr. Alfred Devine, whom you met at the Worths' dinner, writes poems. I could ask him—"

"Oh, do," said Katharine. "Do you think he could manage it at once? Would you give him this sheet of music? The words are here."

Walter Dillon took the roll rather dubiously. He began to be afraid he had got himself into a scrape. Suppose Devine should be in one of his "moods" and refuse? A glance at Katharine's anxious face made him resolve to write the verse himself rather than disappoint her. How desperate this resolve was can be imagined, as he had not even tried a rhyme in his life.

As they stood on the corner, Katharine's car came up, and Dillon could find no excuse for prolonging the interview. His aunt smiled gently, almost pathetically as Katharine entered the car. Looking

at the young man, hopeful, cheerful, and with an air of self-reliance, Katharine felt that the pathos was real—there was such a contrast between youth looking towards the sunrise and age with the sunset on the horizon facing it. It suddenly occurred to Katharine that perhaps she had been bold in attacking Walter Dillon. But then he did not seem like a stranger; and, after all, she forgot her annoyance in thinking of the concert and contralto, for, when she was in earnest, Katharine was a girl of one idea. If Dillon had known this, he would scarcely have annoyed his aunt by outbursts of song, as they went their way towards her boarding house. He could not guess how much "The Winter Roses" had to do with Katharine's cordiality.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"The sky is like the water,
Gray as the hue of lead."

KATHARINE'S desire to give Mrs. Carey a new interest in life, to make her feel that she had a right to claim her husband's affection, made many ripples in several lives. If Katharine had been less straightforward or more experienced, she would probably never have seriously considered the idea upon which she was about to act with all her might. She had been taught early in life to do the good nearest her hand, and, if anybody had tried to damp her ardor in the present instance by asking her whether she was a sister's keeper, she would have been unutterably pained. This thing seemed good to her, and there was nothing for her but to put her hand to the plough. She imagined that her uncle, of whom she thought very lovingly, would have approved of it. And, as she went home it gave her a certain pleasure to think that Walter Dillon would have a part in it, although that part might be only helping in the translation of "The Winter Roses."

If Mrs. Carey had voice enough and training enough to sing the second part of the duo, Katha-

rine was resolved that her husband should hear her under the best auspices. She could be made to look almost beautiful in some of the finery which Mrs. Sherwood had sent to Katharine. In her heart Katharine could not help feeling a certain contempt for Ferdinand Carey. She said to herself that if she were a man, she would see deeper than most other men; she could never be caught or repelled by mere dress, or a conventional manner, or the sweetness of a voice. But, after all, she admitted, with a sigh, men were only men, and unlike women, had to be pampered with toys! And so she arranged in her mind a glittering array of toys with which Ferdinand Carey was to be caught. When she reached home she put Mrs. Carey through her musical poses, after tea, until that young woman became tired and hoarse.

In the meantime Alfred Devine had been approached by Dillon on the subject of the song. Dillon found him at the Art Club, where he always dined. The moment was auspicious—just after dinner. And, as they sat at one of the front windows, cigars in hand, Devine passed his hand through his thick curling hair, and hummed the words in German.

"Pretty," he said, humming again, and pretending to follow the notes, although he could not read one of them. "I'll do it with pleasure, dear boy, only, if I like it when it's done, you'll have to let me sell the words to a magazine."

"I don't know anything about that," said Dillon, much pleased. "Only do it—and if you can, by to-morrow night."

"For a lady?" asked Devine, looking under his eyelids at Dillon.

"Yes," said Dillon, "oh yes—who else would want a soprano part in a song?" And then, returning Devine's quizzical glance, he added, by way of changing the subject: "I am looking for a small house; I shall take to domestic life soon, and you will not find me up at all hours, at the old place, willing to brew all sorts of concoctions for you."

"Indeed?" asked Devine, smiling and adjusting his white tie—for the poet had the reputation of living in his evening suit—"So soon? Dear, dear! Has Davey de Grandmont given you a fat contract for a new house? And who is the lady?"

"What do you mean?" asked Dillon. "I wish Davey de Grandmont would give me the order; Mrs. Worth has almost promised it. I merely said I wanted to rent a small house, not that I intended to build a place for Davey de Grandmont."

"And *I* merely asked who the lady is—of course, the lady of the song—I mean the woman of the song, since 'lady' has become so awfully common."

Dillon understood, and flushed. He did not answer at once. He was angry for an instant; then his heart beat a trifle more quickly. If it were possible—if Katharine O'Conor would ever think of him at all, how bright life would become. But,

no—it was not possible. The color faded from his face, he bit the end from his cigar, to gain time for answering Devine with composure.

"You are wrong," he said. "I cannot think of marriage. You do not know how poor I am. If I were like you, with several thousand a year and a reputation which carries you everywhere, I might think of it. As it is, I never do think of it," he added, somewhat bitterly, "though Heaven knows I long for a home of my own."

"I have often wondered, Dillon, whether you have ever met anyone—here, don't flush up again," added Devine, with an odd glitter in his dark eyes, which often came there when he was vivisecting his friends, to get material for a book. "There's a strange scrupulousness about you Catholic men—when you're good Catholics—on the subject of love which I don't understand. It's like Renan's idea of sin—you don't talk about it. I admire your fineness of fibre and your reticence; but you are one of the few men of my acquaintance who have never jested on the subject of women or love."

"It is too sacred, and too often profaned," said Dillon, with a great desire to change the subject. "Come, Devine—"

"Have you ever met anybody?" pursued the poet, maliciously.

"Yes. One. I spoke to her but little; yet Devine, I said to myself that I should always think of her—" Dillon's face was turned away

again, "as—as—you'll think me conceited—as Dante thought of Beatrice—as a star in Heaven."

Devine did not answer. He looked out into the twilight, and said, after a time, with a sigh:

"I envy you. The century has not spoiled you. Your Church has a knack of keeping some of you fellows very pure in heart. You're a good fellow, Dillon."

He made a great racket then, and called a servant up to scold him because the cigars were bad; but he ended by giving the man a dollar, in spite of the club rules, and saying that they were good. After that he sent for black coffee, went to a little table, and, having made his curly hair stand almost on end, he began to translate the poem. Dillon sat near him during the process. There was silence, broken only by the thundering of the huge omnibuses on Broad street or the sound of an occasional cab. Devine tore up at least six pages of note paper, and then sent out for two German dictionaries. While waiting for them, he refreshed himself by asking questions.

"What do you want a home for, Dillon?" he asked. "Let me see—water, daughter; *schön*—fair, *blume*—can't rhyme flower with fair! What do you want a home for, Dillon?"

"My aunt, Mrs. Warland, has—poor old lady—come to town. My mother, you know, is living with relatives in England; and so Aunt Betty is alone. She has a house in the country, and she

loves the old place beyond everything. But something failed; her small income stopped; she couldn't even pay her taxes, and so she had to come to me. She hasn't another friend on this side of the ocean. I'm going to give her half of what I have, so we must get a little house."

"Can you afford it?" asked the prudent poet.

"I have not thought of that," said Dillon, laughing. "I'm young, I'm half Irish—and the Marquis *may* ask me to build his house."

Devine shook his head. "*Gluehen*—I'm not sure what that means; *die rosen*—that comes in all right. Let the old lady go back to her house."

"She can't. I wish she could. It broke her heart to leave it; almost killed her. She held out till she almost starved and froze. Why, her husband and children lived and died in it. It is a great barrack of a place and out of repair—'Warlands,' you must have heard of it. It used to be the 'show' place in Montgomery County. It would take a lot of money to make it habitable. No; she must stay with me. There was an incident at the station when she came in, that put new life into her; you might make a poem of it. She was sitting there, hopeless, depressed, resting awhile, and crying, I'm afraid; when a girl—God bless her—gave her some fine roses—"

"*Die rosen—bluehen*—oh, this is awful! The words will not come. Do stop your chatter, Dillon. Here

come the dictionaries. They won't help. More coffee, waiter."

Dillon was discreetly silent, while the poet agonized. Suddenly Devine slapped on the book with effusion, and read:

"The sky is like the water,
Gray as the hue of lead,
The fisher's little daughter
Weareth black upon her head;
The boughs that wave above her
Are gray with winter frost,
And all the hearts that love her
The bridge of death have crossed."

"Haven't I caught it?" asked Devine, triumphantly.

"It is very cheerless."

"Quite in the modern style," said the poet. "Listen:"

"I hear no children's voices,—
Silent the fisher's maid—
No gladsome soul rejoices
Where bold boys used to wade
In summer, in the sunlight,
When days were sweet with song,
And the wide beach was smooth and white,
Not strewn with wrecks along."

"It gets worse and worse," said Dillon; "I wish you people would write cheerful poetry."

"Yes, yes," said the poet, absent-mindedly. "I don't like 'gladsome soul' much—but I can't help

it—you're in such a hurry. Now the soprano takes the song up:"

"Ah, see the winter roses,
Hedged round with greenest moss;
Each curléd leaf encloses
A fragrant balm for loss.
And, though there is no breaking
Of the grayness overhead,
They teach of an awakening—
Of life that is not dead."

"Don't you think the last line might—" began Dillon.

"No, the last line might *not*," said Devine, glaring at him, and twisting his immaculate tie under his ear. "I hate stupid people!"

Dillon whistled. The ways of the poets were strange, but he reflected that it would be wrong to knock one down, even when he deserved it, for it might be a long time before another would see the light.

"Listen—and don't give advice," snapped Devine.

"See how they glow and quiver,
See how they nod and bend,
While all the world's a-shiver,
They sparks of ruby send;
Like firelight in the garden,
Heart-shaped and red as flame,
They speak of love's sweet pardon
From out their mossy frame."

"And now," said Devine, "the two voices chime in—it's a queer kind of arrangement for a duet—"

"Ah, gray and winter weather,
I wish your days were done,
My heart and hopes together
Could open to the sun;

Ah, roses, winter roses,
I feel your lesson deep,
No gray day ever closes
But leaves us joy to keep."

"It seems all right," said Dillon, dubiously, as he folded the paper which Devine thrust towards him; "but I think that if I were a professional poet, I could improve that last line. What does it me—" He said no more; the ireful look in the poet's eye warned him to go. With a hasty, "Thank you," he went down stairs, leaving Devine loudly roaring at the waiters.

In three-quarters of an hour he stood in Mrs. Cayre's little parlor, waiting for Katharine. That young lady appeared, smiling, pleased, beautiful, he thought. He explained that his aunt was too tired to come.

"And you brought the translation!" she cried, taking Devine's paper and the sheet of music from his outstretched hands. "Oh, how good of you, Mr. Dillon!"

All of a sudden she remembered her qualms of the morning. Perhaps she had shown an unmaidenly eagerness in asking him to the house—perhaps he would think her bold. She did not ask

him to sit down; she again said, but with a touch of frost in her voice:

"How kind of you, Mr. Dillon."

He felt the difference at once; he saw it in the movement with which she turned to the piano, tried the first bars of the accompaniment, and murmured as if to herself:

"Ah, roses, winter roses,
I feel your lesson deep,
No gray day ever closes—"

"Oh, Mr. Dillon—pardon me—will you not take a chair?"

"You are very kind," he answered, brushing the nap of his hat nervously. "I have an engagement —with my aunt."

"Give my love to your aunt, and tell her I hope to see her. *Must* you go? Good night."

"Good night."

When he reached the doorstep he felt unreasonably angry. He said to himself that he hated "society girls," and of all that type the most obnoxious of all was Katharine O'Conor.

Katharine sat down at the piano, but she did not play.

He heard her sing the first words of the song:

"The sky is like the water,
Gray as the hue of lead."

She stopped there; he did not know it, for he made his way down the street, with a feeling that

his heart was lead. The words ran through his mind so continually that at last he did not know whether he was angry at them or at Katharine.

She sat at the piano in a state of doubt and depression. It occurred to her that she ought not to have been so abrupt. He had come a long distance. Perhaps she had been rude. He might have stayed a few moments, and not have minded her manner. An engagement with his aunt! Nonsense! Of all unreasonable people he was the worst. Twice in one day, he had managed to put her in the wrong. She would probably never see him again. Well—what of that? Then the leaden grayness of the words she had been singing seemed to shadow her heart: she bowed her head and cried, wishing all the time that Mother Ursula had never let her leave the convent.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ferdinand Carey's Wife.

THE French—who are the Greeks of the modern world, and are almost as wise as the old Greeks—have a proverb that the unexpected always happens. They might add that the impossible sometimes happens. Katharine's dream about the reunion of Ferdinand Carey and his wife would have seemed to most people versed in the ways of the world as an impossible thing. They would have said that, if Carey had been ashamed of her lack of those social qualities which his set most valued, and had preferred conventionality to loyalty, he deserved to lose her, and that she was better without him; the chances, too, were that, even if Katharine could make Mrs. Carey as attractive as she hoped, that Ferdinand would not be won by it; again, how childish seemed to be her plan about the song.

Herr Teufelfisch grumbled at Devine's English words; they were by no means equal to the German, he said—by no means—they were, in fact, absurd. Nevertheless, he accepted them, and, after Mrs. Carey had been presented, put them in rehearsal. Mrs. Carey's voice proved fairly satisfactory; he

said she had not tone enough, she was deficient in the *ego*, and he grunted in a dissatisfied way several times during the days of drill that followed the introduction.

Mrs. Carey lost her careworn look; here was work, not hard, grinding work that took her below the level of her husband, but work that raised her; and here was work that might mean money, to help in the household expenses.

The drill went on every day for a week, at Herr Teufelfisch's house. He was most exacting. It was settled that Katharine was to sing "Winter Roses" with Mrs. Carey in the first part of the programme, a serenade by Schubert and the Titania song in the second part. Katharine protested that he rehearsed her too often.

"It would ruin you to break down," he said. "Remember, *mein fraulein*, that your bread and butter must depend on your singing; you are no longer a young lady amateur, but a professional."

"Why should I break down?" asked Katharine, with a smile. "I am not afraid."

Herr Teufelfisch shook his head. "Try that bar again. So! *So!* So! So! Ach, that is better!"

At last, he announced that the concert was to be at Mrs. Percival's, one of a series of entertainments in honor of the engagement of Mr. Wirt Percival and the Lady Alicia St. John.

Katharine's heart sank at this.

"You must let me off," she said. "I really cannot face them so soon. It will be too hard. My aunt will be there. Oh, it will be dreadful! Besides, the Percivals will not like it."

"They do like it," said Herr Teufelfisch, offering Katharine a pinch of snuff. "They think they will do you a service by putting money in your purse. Besides, your little friend will lose her twenty-five dollars if you refuse to sing my 'Winter Roses' with her. And, besides, Mr. Ferdinand Carey will be there. So?"

Katharine looked up in a startled way from the music she was studying. What could Herr Teufelfisch mean? Had he guessed? He chuckled.

"I am old, dear *fraulein*, I am old, but not therefore a fool. I have heard the story of Mr. Ferdinand Carey's marriage. What one thinks nobody knows, everybody knows. Your friend is Mrs. Carey. You are anxious about her. I put two and two together."

"And you think I am right?"

"Right! Of course—you are right because you are good. You sing well; but, if you sang as well as a nightingale, I would not take so much trouble with you, if you were not good."

"It is so soon! How can I face them all?"

"It will be your opportunity," said Herr Teufelfisch, watching the struggle plainly visible in her face.

"Suppose," she said, catching at a gleam of hope, "that they refuse to have me when you tell them—"

Herr Teufelfisch frowned, and she stopped speaking.

"I am the director, the master. Mrs. Percival will have anybody I choose—or there will be no concert. But, see, *mein fraulein*—you will sing 'Winter Roses' well. Your friend—it is easy to teach her that song—will sing it well with you. What then? Mr. Carey will be pleased. He will say, 'Ah, the little peasant girl I married has become a singer; she is graceful; she has talent; and, if she is well dressed—'"

"Oh, she shall have a beautiful dress," Katharine said, "one my aunt gave me."

"Well—Mr. Carey will like her all the better for that, and you will make her happy. I do not approve of marriage, as a rule," Herr Teufelfisch said, reflectively, "it spoils singers; they like to stay at home; they worry about their children; but when people are married, they should stay married. In Vienna there are some who marry according to the Protestant rite, that they may obtain divorces; it is wrong," said the musician with conviction. "And since Mr. Carey has a wife, it is well that there should be no divorce."

"I will sing," said Katharine, with resolution, "but it is the hardest thing I ever did."

Herr Teufelfisch smiled; and the rehearsal went on. After she had gone, in rather a depressed mood (for though Katharine had been trained to a keen sense of duty, she hated disagreeable things as

heartily as any Sybarite), the old music teacher sat down to play a crashing march of his own.

"She will be a great singer," he said, laughing. "When she has made her first plunge, she will not care—for it will be the hardest of all. As if I were interested in the little Carey—as if I cared for the stupid Carey who talked aloud in the *adagio* of my symphony the other night. But she is good, and that helps to arrange everything for her."

Katharine had the unpleasant task of telling Mrs. Carey of the ordeal before her. To her surprise, the information was received with joy. The gown intended for her was fitted and bedecked with feverish eagerness.

"I shall have my chance to win him back," she said, "my only chance, perhaps. Oh, you must pray, pray!"

Jenny's deft fingers assisted materially in changing one of Katharine's beautiful gowns to suit the new singer. She was not at all nervous, and at the rehearsal after Katharine had told her what she was to expect, she sang so brilliantly that Herr Teufelfisch began to take an interest in her.

At last the evening came, and on the afternoon preceding it, Katharine was moved by a little note which came to her accompanied by a huge box. The note was from Mrs. Percival; she told Katharine briefly that she would send the carriage for her at seven o'clock, and that Mr. Percival begged leave to present her with a bouquet of lilies of the valley.

Mrs. Percival added that Mr. Sherwood was expected to arrive home in time for the concert.

Katharine's heart bounded; she would see her uncle; he, at least, would sympathize with her, if her aunt had not prejudiced him. She would sing her best, and please him, at any rate.

The carriage did not come until eight o'clock. Two hours before that time, Mrs. Carey had been waiting, attended by the excited Jenny; according to the idea of her sister, she was a vision of beauty. And certainly Katharine's soft, white dress, with its touches of silver lace, helped to bring out her good points. She held her head well, and Katharine laughed, as she showed her how to crook her elbows in the latest English fashion. Mrs. Carey took it all seriously.

"You are much more like the sort of woman my aunt admires than I am," Katharine said. "That's the very crook of the elbows the Lady Alicia has. Isn't it funny?"

But this interlude of nonsense passed; the awful moment of departure came. Katharine seized her music and the flowers, and the two *debutantes* drove away in the Percival carriage.

There had been a council of war at Mrs. Percival's previous to the concert. Mr. Percival had been for asking Katharine to the dinner that was to precede it; but Mrs. Sherwood, who declared that she would not meet a "professional singer" socially, had carried the day. The Lady Alicia

was delighted at the prospect of seeing Katharine again. Mrs. Sherwood had one fear. This was that her husband would return in time for the concert. He did not come; the danger that he might make a reconciliation with Katharine was averted.

Mrs. Percival kissed Katharine warmly, and greeted her friend politely. As for Mr. Percival, he declared that he would give a concert every week, if he could only get Katharine to come.

"And I want to tell you, ma'am," he said with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, "that I've made the acquaintance of one of the priests at St. John's—and who knows what may come of it?"

Katharine found herself in a very comfortable glow, in spite of her fears. A little sympathy is very encouraging; it is a great steadier of the nerves. After all, why should it be harder to sing for pay than when one is not paid? she asked herself.

In the little dressing room, there was a group of other singers. Herr Teufelfisch presented them, but she could not remember their names. She could hear the flutter of the waiting auditors. A mingling of scents and the soft buzz of talk came in through the half-drawn portière.

"*He* is there!" whispered her friend. "I heard his voice just then."

"Be calm, my dear," Katharine said, forgetting her nervousness. "Be calm—or you will spoil all!"

The overture was over. A well-bred trickling—it would be absurd to call it a burst—of applause

greeted Katharine. She sang well; Herr Teufelfisch nodded approvingly, and secretly said that she was a promising singer.

She forgot herself at the sight of Mrs. Carey when she returned to the dressing room. The supreme moment for another was more to her than her own success. She saw that excitement and suspense had transfigured Ferdinand Carey's wife; her eyes glowed, her cheeks were flushed. She stood alone near the long window of the little room, while somebody sang Proch's variations in a high soprano; Katharine went to her, and took her hand. Neither spoke. There was the sound of well-bred applause, and then came more vocal gymnastics. After this, like dew on a hot night, followed some Polish airs, national, intense, beautiful, of which the harp seemed part rather than the mere expression of them.

"Now!"

Mrs. Carey made the sign of the cross, and caught up her sheet of music. In a moment, she and Katharine were making the low, sweeping courtesy of the convent.

Katharine saw Ferdinand Carey before her, just in front of Mrs. Sherwood, who had her fan before her face. Carey did not move a muscle. Amazement showed itself in his eyes; then he became pale. She did not dare to abstract her mind any longer from the music. She had Herr Teufelfisch to please now, not the auditors only. He finished the prelude to "Winter Roses." Katharine took up the note.

"It is well," the musician said. "I am afraid of the other one."

The other one disappointed him; soft, deep, true, her voice took up the second part; and, after that, "the *ensemble*," as Herr Teufelfisch said, "was *wunderschön*."

He reflected, with some satisfaction, that the success of his song meant a great deal of money in his pocket; for many people would buy it.

"Miss O'Conor will have fame," he said to Mrs. Percival; "she will be heard everywhere—and so will my songs. So?"

After this song, Ferdinand Carey made his way to the little room, from which the other singers had gone to supper. Katharine and his wife were there, expectant, fearful. He bowed to Katharine, and took his wife's hands in his.

"Can you forgive?" he said.

"I have forgiven long ago," she answered. "I am happy now; is not that enough?"

He offered her his arm. And, without a word the two left, to join the party in the supper-room. The dimness in Katharine's eyes disappeared in a laugh. They had forgotten her. She dropped her bouquet and looked after them. How quickly joy blots out sorrow, she thought! And how strange that a man whom his wife loved so intensely, could have forsaken her so heartlessly, to be brought back to her by a new dress, a few clear notes of music, and other people's admiration. If a man's love was

like that, surely it was a poor thing. She knew what Wirt Percival's was—a mixture of vanity and calculation. Lord Marchmont's seemed to be all calculation, and Ferdinand Carey's was equally heartless and more childish. As she looked through the gauze portière, she saw the gay groups crossing the hall—the men attentive, the women talking rapidly. How pretty it looked! And yet how hollow it all was, if the men were like the men she knew.

The excitement of her work was over. Her climax had come too soon. She had brought these two together, made them happy, and they had forgotten her! She thought it all over, and recalled the love in "A Sister's Story." That was worth living for—but there was none of it in the world. Mrs. Craven had invented it, to make her story interesting.

She was aroused by a step near her.

"Mrs. Percival has sent me for you," said a voice she knew.

"Oh, Mr. Dillon—is it you?"

"Yes," Dillon answered, thrusting aside the curtain, "Mrs. Percival remembered me at the last moment."

He looked to be the embodiment of cheerfulness, and his white tie and expanse of shirt front made his cheeks seem redder and his eyes bluer.

His appearance jarred on Katharine's æsthetic sense; she would have preferred somebody more in the Hamlet style at that moment.

"I congratulate you. Mr. Devine's words went well. Didn't you 'flat' a little in the fourth bar?"

"No," said Katharine, sharply, "you might know better. Herr Teufelfisch would have stopped the accompaniment, if we had 'flatted' the least bit."

"Oh, I didn't know," said Dillon, airily. "I know you hate compliments, so I just tried the other thing, that's all. Come to supper with me, and all will be forgiven."

Katharine took his arm: the supper-room was radiant with lights and flowers and all the Percival gold plate. In the centre of the horse-shoe, stood Ferdinand Carey, with his wife; he was presenting her to the people about him, and Katharine saw Biddy kiss her on both cheeks. She felt an impulse of jealousy. Ferdinand Carey's wife, whom she had done so much for, was about to be carried away from her by the very people who an hour ago would have passed her by unnoticed.

But Biddy came flying towards her.

"Oh, Kit," she said, "what a romance; and how glad I am it wasn't Wirt, after all. What a pretty little thing she is! And so you brought it all about, you dear! How happy you must be! Mr. Dillon? Thank you; I will take an ice. In two weeks, my dear, we are to be married; and you *must* be a bridesmaid. I see by your eyes that you intend to say no! Nonsense! You may sing for a living or even keep a shop, but that will not make you any the less Katharine O'Conor—my own Kit!"

Katharine was pleased, in spite of herself; and young Dillon was attentive. After a time, Mrs. Percival came up to her.

"So you have arranged matters," she said.

"I helped," Katharine said. "They seem to have arranged matters themselves."

"I suppose it is for the best," Mrs. Percival said. "It would have simplified matters, if she had died. But she's presentable; I did not expect that."

Katharine made an impatient movement.

"How can you talk that way, Mrs. Percival? Are souls and hearts nothing? Don't you see that your conventionalities are the absurdest pretences? Who really cares whether your brother married a cook or the daughter of a wholesale grocer or anybody you please? You are trying to build a basis of aristocracy on thinnest air—and it does harm. Mrs. Carey is as worthy to be of your society as any woman here."

"And this to a hostess from a guest!" said Mrs. Percival, sarcastically.

"She is right!" said Mr. Percival. "That's the way we talk in Duluth. If Mr. Dillon will look after my wife, I'll take you over to that alcove for a glass of *frappe*. It's cooling—and you need it, my dear young woman. By the way, I have made the acquaintance of one of your priests at St. John's. I like him and what he tells me."

"I am so glad," said Katharine. "I'm afraid I was cross with Mrs. Percival."

"She can stand it; she's sometimes cross with me, but my father left me such an angelic temper I can never answer back; you did it for me."

Mrs. Percival hastily joined them.

"Your aunt wants you, Miss O'Conor. A message has come for her and you. Mr. Sherwood was hurt in a railway wreck—slightly, I hope. He has asked for you."

Mrs. Carey came to her, too.

"I must go with you—I will not leave you with your aunt. Do let me be with you in your sorrow."

The three went to Kenwood almost in silence. Mrs. Carey had her happy thoughts; the others had nothing to say to each other.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Katharine's Confidant.

MARCUS SHERWOOD had been in the rear car of an accommodation train he had taken, to get across the country, to reach a station from which he could travel home comfortably. He was anxious to reach home—anxious to heal the breach between his wife and Katharine, and anxious to see the girl who had become as a daughter to him and who had begun to make his home "homely."

A rail was broken—no one knows how—the train went down an embankment, and Mr. Sherwood was brought home two hours later than he expected to reach there. The doctors said there was no hope for him. His wife shrank back, as she entered the room; there was the beginning of a great change in his face. His eyes brightened.

"It has come," he said, "it has come at last. Thank Heaven, you will not want. And you, Katharine—kneel here and pray. I should like to see a priest—"

"Foolishness!" exclaimed his wife. "You *will* live; you *must* live—I shall have the proper kind

of clergyman at once. A priest! What would people say?"

"I am dying," he answered, earnestly.

She did not answer; she could not doubt it.

The butler had heard Mr. Sherwood's words; he started at once for the church.

"I remember the priest who risked his life to give *something* to the boy who was drowning. I remember; it comes back now—I have been too busy—but I always remembered that. Katharine, say a prayer!"

Katharine, kneeling beside him, began the *Credo* in a low voice; he followed her. She added the Act of Contrition; his voice faltered, and was still.

When the priest came, he was dead; and Mrs. Sherwood locked herself in her room; she would not see Katharine; there was now no consolation for her in this world, and she did not care for the world beyond.

* * * * * * *

Katharine, after her uncle's funeral, went back to her work. Ferdinand Carey took a house in the suburbs and sent Jenny Mavrick and her brother off to school. Katharine found a boarding-house near the old music master's; her work must be her world now. Fortunately, she was near a church; she divided herself between religion and art.

"Ach, it is lovely!" the old musician said to his pupil; "she will be an old maid; she cares not for

the idiot-fools of men; she will sing my songs, and perhaps an opera."

Mrs. Sherwood refused to see Katharine. She was furious against her. Biddy was too much engaged with the preparations for her wedding, which was to take place in the Worth drawing-rooms, with the British minister to represent Lord Bolingbroke, who could not come. Her uncle's recent death would, of course, prevent Katharine from being present. And Mrs. Percival really could not ask her coachman to drive so far beyond the lines of her social bailiwick. She left cards twice; and that ended her attentions to Katharine. Mother Ursula wrote frequent letters, full of affection, warning and advice. Katharine was lonely; but she loved the bustle of the world; she enjoyed with an intense delight the overcoming of the difficulties in her art. Sometimes she longed for the convent, but it was with the longing of a tired child, not the love that fills the heart of the woman who has the vocation to the highest state of life. Katharine knew this; she had been too well instructed in the meaning of the word vocation not to know it.

Dillon had called several times. She had sung for him, and they had quarrelled; she began to suspect that he did not care for music. Besides, she could not receive him many times alone in the parlor of her boarding-house. The fact that she was independent made her all the more careful of the proprieties. And Mother Ursula's strict notions

on the question of the chaperon—notions which, as she had seen, coincided with those of Mrs. Sherwood and Mrs. Percival—had become a part of her social code.

A short break in her prayers and work was made by a visit to the Careys. Their house was very simple, but very perfect in its way. She found Ferdinand engaged in copying an old French air, to be set to some words of his own, for his wife. Mrs. Carey sat in a low basket chair, waiting until he should give her the notes, with a mandolin in her hand. She jumped up and kissed Katharine, uttering a little cry of pleasure. Ferdinand rose, too, a little awkwardly. He seemed to have changed. His dress and manner had lost the air of being a bad imitation of the English; he was more natural; and the look of unrest had gone from his face. His wife hastened to make tea on the little brass tripod near the grate fire; she did it so gracefully and so deftly, that Katharine thought Ferdinand had ample reason for his glance of admiration. When she was asked to sing, she gave "Lead, Kindly Light."

"I feel that—I feel that," said Carey, when she had finished it. "There has at last come to me a desire to grasp something more real than earth. We are happy now, but it seems so unreal; and then how can I expect to be so blessed," he added, humbly, "after my selfishness. Great Heavens! Miss O'Conor, how I despise myself for giving way to artificial and corrupt conventionality.

I think it was the spectacle of your sincerity among all that 'society' nonsense, that made me think. Do you remember the talk we had about Cardinal Newman—about the song you have just sung?"

"Very well," said Katharine, smiling. "But I don't think you saw much of me."

"Sufficient," he answered, "to show me that my old life needed to be cast away as—as—as a snake changes its skin."

Katharine laughed.

"And after that does the snake become an eagle and face the sun?"

"Not usually. My simile was bad," he answered, smiling.

"There might be a miracle," said Katharine. "Believe me, Mr. Carey, you will find yourself at rest, and feel a new life in you, if you will look into the sources that have given your wife patience all these years."

"The *vita nuova* of Dante," he added, half in earnest. "Well,—I have thought of it. It would make my wife the happiest woman in the world, and perhaps penitence would drive out remorse."

Katharine was silent. She had a horror of speech in serious moments. After a time, Mrs. Carey came —perhaps she had purposely left them together— and the two sang again "Winter Roses."

Ferdinand Carey followed the Light; shortly after Wirt Percival's marriage he was received into the Church. Katharine did not meet him and his

wife again until after this event had taken place. If they had been permitted, they would have made a statue of her, and burned a lamp before it. There was consolation for Katharine in the result of her plan. She had done her best, honestly, according to her light; but the very happiness of these people seemed to accentuate her loneliness. Herr Teufelfisch had become a ruthless master; and sometimes Katharine was tired even of music. His rage for technique took all the poetry out of it; and music without sentiment was nothing to her. She sang at musicales, and sang well. She earned as much money as she needed, but she hated the work. The money made her independent, and gave her the means of helping people who required her help. And yet she looked forward to a long life—in youth life seems long—with a dreary feeling of dislike. Always to be facing a crowd of unknown people, always to be taking care of one's voice, always to be practising new music—it was hateful. She envied the young women she saw around her in their quiet, frugal homes, out of reach of that public whose slave she was.

She spent the eve of the Lady Alicia's wedding day at the Percivals', and went to early Mass with the prospective bride. It seemed very sad to Katharine that Biddy should kneel with her at the altar rail in the early morning light, without Wirt. The Lady Alicia was subdued, nervous, depressed. As they went home from the church she suddenly said:

"Kit, I envy you. Why wasn't I born an American? You are free. If Bolingbroke wasn't here, I believe I'd back out!"

Katharine kissed her friend impulsively. What was the use of talking—Biddy wanted sympathy, not advice.

The function in the Worth drawing-rooms was as imposing as flowers, upholsterers and the rest could make. Mrs. Sherwood, being in mourning, could not assist. She revenged herself by sending the Lady Alicia a magnificent pearl necklace, which, as she repeatedly announced, had been intended for Katharine. But Katharine did not feel this blow. The wedding seemed to her to be a sad travesty on what a marriage should be. Wirt was indifferent, except so far as his vanity was satisfied, and Biddy cared only for the ease and luxury that her marriage would bring. Katharine went home before the "maimed rites" of the marriage began. There seemed to be a cloud over everything. Was wealth and social consideration, fine dresses and luxurious carriages, and unlimited roses and visits to Paris, worth such a sacrifice? For a moment she doubted; for example is a great persuader, and Katharine had much respect for Biddy, and more affection for her. She thought it all over, and answered—No. Better a lonely life than such slavery—better work, and hard work, than a marriage at whose ceremonies no ring could be blessed. She felt restless after she had gone home; she could not practice; she could

not read. It occurred to her that it would be well to show respect for her aunt by calling on her at Kenwood; and she went.

Mrs. Sherwood's eyes sparkled, as she read the name on the card. She determined to add a last pang to the heart of the girl who had dared to defeat her plans, and so she wrote on her own large card:

"You need not come here expecting anything from *me*. No will has been found; I suppose that's what you want to know."

Katharine blushed. What sort of a woman could her aunt be to send such a message open to the eyes of a servant? Her first impulse was to go upstairs and to pour a torrent of words into her aunt's ears —to defend herself, to denounce a worldliness that amounted to rapacity, to cover her aunt with confusion; but she restrained herself, with a short prayer. She tried to smile at the old servant, who opened the door respectfully for her, but failed miserably. She indemnified herself for her Christian reticence by a brief dialogue, in which she mentally overcame her aunt and brought her to a sense of the hollowness of her beliefs in an eloquently sarcastic series of speeches.

Once in her little room, she determined to get rid of the intolerable sting of her aunt's insult in some way or other. She blessed her capacity for work, and determined to do something very hard. Herr

Teufelfisch had given her a wonderful MS. composition of the great tone master, Leschetizky. Mother Ursula had often smiled at her impatience of instrumental exercises and her patience with vocal work. She determined to conquer the difficulties made by the great master of Paderewski. She soon forgot everything but the almost preternatural obstacles in her way. But she could not manage it, and, after a hard struggle, she gave it up—she would never be able to amaze Mother Ursula and Herr Teufelfisch with her complete mastery of this tone-poem. She sat by her window, and looked down at the passing street-cars, at this hour in the early evening laden with crowds of people going home from work. Each of that crowd had his history, his struggles, his triumphs, his defeats—and God watched over them all! Somehow the thought gave her comfort. She raised the window; Spring was coming. There was a vague warmth in the air. The voices of little children, pent during the long, cold winter nights, when darkness fell without twilight, came to her ears.

She realized for the first time that she was dependent on the work of her own hands now that her uncle was dead. No doubt whatever had been left her by her father had been used up in giving her an education, she said to herself. Well, she had *that;* she could sew, she could bake, she could do a dozen womanly things as well as any woman could do them, or perhaps better; and, above all, she had been

taught that the household work done by the Queen of Heaven, for the God of Heaven and Earth, was neither degrading nor irksome, provided it were done for His honor and glory; and even if her voice should fail—and, like many other singers, she had as great a horror of this as of sudden death—she would not be entirely dependent. She had admitted that the words of her aunt had a double sting, because, unworldly as she was, she cherished a hope that her uncle might have remembered that, after all, she was an orphan without a home. He had not done so; she banished all disappointment from her, and knelt to say a prayer for his soul. She arose, looked down again at the twilight street, and determined to take a walk, at least to the end of the street.

The cool, evening air—the Spring softness was gone now—revived her spirits. She went over in her thoughts the difficulties of the Leschetizky tones; this was one of her ways of improving her mind. Suddenly somebody brushed against her.

"I beg pardon!" the somebody said; it was Dillon, hurrying along with his hand full of orange and lemon-colored daffodils in whose cups an American robin might almost have bathed.

"Oh, Miss O'Conor!" he exclaimed. She was glad to see him; but, according to her ethics, that was a good reason for being as cool as possible. She nodded rather stiffly; he turned to walk by her side.

"These are for you," he said, giving her the flowers. "I intended to leave them—"

"And to run away!" she said, sarcastically.

"Well, not exactly; to leave a card," he answered, somewhat abashed by her tone. "I felt that perhaps you would not care to see me, as my aunt was not with me."

"How prudent!" she said. "I did not know that you men needed chaperons. Is it a new custom?"

Dillon was not usually knocked off his conversational feet, but this had the effect of silencing him. They walked to the corner, and turned.

"I am fond of daffodils but these are rather large," she said.

"I shall have a consultation with Mother Nature about some smaller ones. I will mention that Miss O'Conor is dissatisfied with the ordinary daffodils. Shall I say good evening?" He raised his hat.

"If you like," she said. "Probably your aunt is waiting dinner for you; and, as you have no chaperon, I can't ask you to dine with me. But don't go yet; I am very unhappy, Mr. Dillon."

Dillon forgot everything but her voice; the sarcasm had gone out of it; he was her servant at once. Katharine had been restless because she had no confidant; she had found an excellent listener.

"And so you are not rich?" he asked, with a tremor in his voice.

"I am very poor," she said, "but I really don't mind it—the Sisters did not bring me up to be a fine lady. I think I shall make a capital poor girl."

His tone had changed; he was gay, sympathetic, and serious by turns until eight o'clock struck, and he bade her good-bye at her door after a long walk.

"She is not rich!" he said, "she is alone in the world, and I—" he was murmuring to himself, as he went home, "and I must be rich in order to give her *all*." He sighed a little, and then hummed "Winter Roses."

Katharine went to her room, strangely elated. Mr. Dillon was interesting; she would go to see his aunt on Saturday.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Glove.

JUNE came. There were no more concerts in town. Herr Teufelfisch was about to take his annual trip to Vienna, to confer with "the supreme Leschetizky," and he persuaded Katharine that it would be a wise thing to spend these months in one of the German or Italian cities, where, according to his view, the only great singing masters lived. He did not recommend Vienna, but Munich, where he had a sister, or Naples, where his brother taught, might do. In either of these cities, he could secure friends for Katharine. She was almost persuaded to go; she had a little money, for she had been saving of late, and Herr Teufelfisch assured her that this was the best investment she could make. The journey had no charms for her; she did not care specially for Dresden or Naples; she would have preferred to spend the summer in one of the many beautiful and quiet green nooks near the city. But, since her voice must be the one gift which was to gain her way in the world, she determined to cultivate it to the utmost. She made her preparations with some reluctance. The city was at its best in

June, and she had learned to love it. The scent of the honeysuckle filled the street in which she lived, and the air was balm. Biddy wrote just at this time, only a few lines urging her to come to London; little was said, except this. Katharine thought it ominous. This was not the way in which young and happy brides generally write.

Katharine had met Mr. Percival one day as she was coming out of St. John's Church. He held out his hand, with a look of genuine pleasure.

"Well, my dear," he said, "where have you been?"

"At home—hard at work," she answered.

He shook his head, and looked at her with his keen eyes.

"You are worried, I can see that. Now, let us be gay. We shall have a great spree, and a good talk. Shall it be soda-water at Wanamaker's, or an ice at Blank's?"

Katharine laughed; it was pleasant to see Mr. Percival again.

"The ice, please," she said. "And I shall enjoy a talk. How is Mrs. Percival?" she asked, as they turned into Chestnut street.

"Well. Busy. Great charity strawberry festival for abandoned dogs at Germantown. I don't know whether the abandoned dogs or the festival is at Germantown—that's the way the cards read. Why don't you come to see Mrs. Percival?"

"She never comes to see me."

"Oh, she can't—too busy. Why, even I am abandoned for the dogs! Society is the modern Moloch. There is not a better woman in the world than my wife, when she lets her heart direct her. But this society business has so enervated her, that I don't think anything but a stunning blow will ever break the crust. She is fond of you; but—oh, don't let us talk of the shams and the artifices. Come and see us, when you can. I have read all the books the priest recommended to me. But do you know, Miss O'Conor, your religion frightens me. One should have to be *awfully* good to be a Catholic. Think of what the Mass means; I have just been reading Percy Fitzgerald's *Jewels of the Mass*, a lovely book, and — but here we are at Blank's."

Katharine and Mr. Percival seated themselves at one of the tables, and were served with one of their unequaled ices, in which Mr. Percival, like all good Philadelphians, took a proper pride, and in which the pensive Katharine was not without interest.

"This *is* nice," she said.

"Don't you regret the luxurious life at Kenwood?"

"Oh, no," she said, "I should be content in my work, if I were near some friend. Mrs. Carey has gone away; she is happy; she no longer needs me. Biddy is married—"

Mr. Percival's face changed.

"The Worths had a cable from her to-day. Wirt is coming back. There has been a nasty row. Your Biddy has a temper, I fancy. They didn't get along well in London; Wirt is coming back alone. He has dropped all the St. John crowd; they stick to the Lady Alicia, of course." Katharine dropped her spoon.

"Oh, Mr. Percival! Is this true? Poor Biddy! Oh, how sad, how sad!"

"I don't think a girl who marries for money, and merely likes the appendage to it called a husband will suffer much."

"Oh, yes, Biddy will—her pride will be touched at such a desertion."

Mr. Percival shrugged his shoulders.

"Such marriages are mockeries. My wife has prayed long for my conversion; but it humiliates me to think that she should have married me and concealed all her life her ideas about the Mass. It made a terrible gulf; and the Lady Alicia ought never to have married Wirt. A marriage where there is such a terrible divergence in essentials is a mistake—unless the wife is an angel of good example and the husband a model of sincerity. Do you ever see your aunt?"

"Never."

"Is not that rather ungrateful? I see by the papers—I saw, rather, for it was about a month ago—that she had given you a lot of money."

"Oh, no," said Katharine, "there was no will."

"No will!" cried Mr. Percival, staring at her.

"No; my uncle forgot it; and my aunt was, I think, a little unkind."

"Unkind!" Mr. Percival cried. "Do you mean to say—well, well—and praises from the newspapers and from all sorts of folks on her generosity. I always longed to have a good chance to *talk* to that woman, and I'll do it this very day. There *was* a will, for your uncle wrote to me from Boston the week before he died, naming me as an executor. How do you live?"

"I sing," said Katharine, "I am a working girl, and I like it, or I should like it, if I only had some friends."

Mr. Percival looked at her, and brought his fist down hard on the table.

"And to think of my wife's expecting me to enter the Catholic Church while she is going on in this heartless way and neglecting the only good Catholic I ever have known! I have a good mind just to stay outside of the church, to spite her. It will serve her right not to find me in Heaven, if she ever gets there!"

Katharine was obliged to smile at the absurdity of this; Mr. Percival laughed, too.

"Come," he said, "finish your ice, and ask no questions; I shall see your aunt at once, and be at your house to-night with a message."

Katharine bade him good-bye. On the way home, she thought, strange to tell, not of Biddy, or the will,

but of young Dillon. She had called on his aunt, but she had not seen him. Herr Teufelfisch, who occasionally saw Mr. Devine, told her that he had been ill; she knew nothing more. She wondered whether he were better or not; possibly his aunt might call, to tell her.

The truth was, that Dillon had been ill for some weeks, of typhoid fever. And as he grew better, he heard from Devine that Katharine was rich again. There was no hope for him now; the bright vision must pass away from him. He could not ask her to be his wife now. He looked facts in the face. He was a struggling architect; he knew, or thought he knew, what young women demanded, especially young women of fashion. If Katharine were rich, he could never dare to ask her—he would never see her again. People declared that she was rich; and she would forget him, but he would never forget her. Opposite his couch during all his sickness, there lay, on the little table, a glove she had worn—a little brown thing, somewhat worn, which Katharine had not missed. His aunt had asked during the latter days, when his health had begun to mend, if she might send for Katharine. Like most of her sex, she was a matchmaker at heart; and the incident of the glove had not escaped her. Her nephew had protested against her sending to Katharine so earnestly that she began to believe that there had been a quarrel. This made her hopeful. Her experience had taught her that quarrels are not, in love affairs, killing frosts.

On this June afternoon, she had watched Dillon as he sat under the grape vine arbor in the little yard at the back of the house. Color was again in his cheek and brightness in his eye; but he did not speak much. He was lying back in a steamer chair, looking at the sky and humming "Winter Roses," when his aunt made up her mind. She saw that he was not happy; at his age and in her experienced mind, there could only be one cause. She looked at him, thin, wasted, pensive, in the gray suit much too big for him now; and she called a little boy who was coming from school. That little boy took a note to Katharine.

After that, the aunt took up her sewing, and waited. She loved her nephew and she loved Katharine, and perhaps they—well, she would soon know.

When Katharine reached home after her talk with Mr. Percival, she found the note. It contained a request that she would call without delay on Dillon's aunt. She took a great deal of trouble with her toilet. and pinned a June rose on her black dress. In a short time she was ringing the bell of the little house. The servant admitted her; she saw with a sense of disappointment that only her friend, the aunt, was in the parlor. But the disappointment did not last long. Dillon came in slowly, at the aunt's summons. And then the sweet-looking old lady suddenly disappeared.

"You have been ill!" Katharine exclaimed, in horror. "Oh, why did you not let me know?"

"Why?" he asked, with some bitterness. "I know the tenor of your society too well, to commit such a breach of propriety. What right had I? Heaven knows, I was very lonely—but you were the last person I should have thought of asking to come here. Outside of Devine and the priest, nobody came."

"I have come."

"You are very kind."

"But when your aunt sent for me, she did not tell me that you were ill—I must be honest about it," she added, hardened by his tone of reproach.

"My aunt sent for you!" he looked at her, and his tone softened. "And you came. But I wish you had not—I can't tell you why—but I wish you had not—your face had almost ceased to haunt me; I was gaining peace; but now—"

"Now?"

The door bell tinkled.

Dillon was still weak; and the appearance of Katharine had shaken his nerves. In his ordinary health, he would have been suave, cool, sarcastic; at least, he would have known how to hide his feelings. That tinkle of the bell reminded him that at any moment this interview, so delightful, so sad, so irritating, might end.

"May I show you to the garden?" he asked. "You are fond of flowers, and that ringing preludes the coming of someone probably to see my aunt."

He led the way through the passage to the long, narrow, old fashioned garden, bordered with box,

and sweetened and colored by clumps of carnations and roses. The sunlight coming red from the West cast the flickering arabesques of vine leaves and tendrils on the brick pavement beneath the arbor. Katharine noticed how thin his hands were, and how loosely his clothes set upon him. A thrill of pity ran through her heart. Dillon the strong, the witty, the self-reliant, was a different man from Dillon the nervous, dependent, sad man before her. It seemed wonderful that one man could show these two phases. She felt a new interest in him, and, as if in a flash, she wondered for the first time whether he were really interested in her. She took note of the little table, with a half-emptied teacup, a bottle of medicine, and the book, Tennyson's Idyls, upon it; and there was a glove, too—a woman's glove, such as she herself might have worn. His manner was odd; she glanced at the glove, and smiled slightly; she understood it. Walter Dillon had made her the centre of his thoughts, and this address came from that fact. Her sight of the glove gave her confidence. She recognized by intuition what girls who have read many novels are always on the lookout for—what they find out by means of set rules of sentiment—that this fragile glove was more powerful than any steel gauntlet of past ages in the hands of a warrior. Dillon offered her the basket chair, and she sat upon the cushions, as gracefully as she could, for she was not used to steamer chairs. The sunlight tinged her hair with

gold, and touched her long eyelashes with luminous reflections. Dillon stood near her, leaning against the arbor.

"Forgive me," he said, "I had no right to find fault with what you cannot help. You are rich, and you are back among the flatterers, the painted butterflies of life, and you must live your life among them."

Katharine found his irritation inexplicable no longer. It was pathetic, and, like all pathos, not altogether unpleasant.

"Why are you so angry against the rich?" she asked, demurely. "I fancy they are seldom as proud or as sensitive as the poor."

"It is not the rich that I hate, but the riches which have come between me and hope. I know it was foolish, Miss O'Conor, and I have given it up. My aunt did not know—"

"Your aunt?" asked Katharine; it was not beneath her to enjoy his embarassment when she felt that she could set it all right in a moment?

"I fancy from some things I *must* have said—since she has repeated them to me—that she imagined we were engaged, and had quarrelled." He colored. "Consequently, she sent for you, and left us in the parlor in that unusual way. If she has told you things I said, it has been out of the mistaken goodness of her heart. I have realized fully the barrier between us, and I can only say that my hallucination was temporary."

Katharine was amused; she could easily understand his morbid, imaginative state of mind—and what harm was there in making him somewhat uncomfortable, since she could make him happy at any moment.

"And what *did* you say?" she asked, looking innocently at him. "Did you scold about me?"

"Ah, then I feel that I keep my self-respect," he said, relieved. "I *am* a fool, I am sure—"

"No, only a man," said Katharine, coolly, "some people think the terms are synonymous. *I* don't," she added, thoughtfully, "at least, not in all cases. But why did you call me names while you were ill? What had I done?"

"I did not call you names—" he stopped short; he did not understand whether she was in fun or earnest.

"Well," she said, after a pause, "you might, at least, give me back my glove. I can forgive your bad language, but theft is a different thing; and I am poor enough to need all the gloves I can keep."

He hesitated; he took the little brown glove from the table, and gave it to her; his heart was like lead. She drew off her own black glove, while he watched her, fitted the brown one on her hand, and slowly buttoned it. Then she took it off again, and held her hand out to him; he took it in both his.

"Now," she said, looking frankly up into his face, "does it really make much difference, Walter, whether I am rich or poor?"

He stood, bending a little and holding her hand. His face became radiant.

"I don't care," she went on. "And I don't know, for Mr. Percival says my uncle left a will. Surely, you will not reject me if I should happen to be rich?"

There was a mischievous look in her eyes; still, he could not speak; it seemed a dream; he found his voice.

"Thank God!" he said. "Thank God. No—nothing makes any difference now." He regained suddenly some of his old spirit. "I don't understand what you say about a will. If you are rich," he added, boldly, almost fancying that the beautiful dream would vanish as he spoke, "I shall make a marriage of reason, which you detest, I have heard."

The roses grew deeper in her cheeks.

"Reason, with Faith and Love, is the best basis for life, is it not? But reason, without these things, is worse than nothing."

The aunt entered the garden with the tea-things; and shortly afterwards, Katharine went home, in the twilight which seemed enchanted, odorous with sweet perfumes, full of happy whispers.

* * * * * * * *

Mrs. Sherwood produced the will, which she had not probated; and, after a stormy scene with Mr. Percival, gave it into his keeping. When Katharine reached her room, she found that Mr. Percival had been there, and had left a note for her. She learned with no special elation—for she could not have been happier—that she had inherited one-third of Marcus Sherwood's great fortune.

In August, Walter Dillon and Katharine were married, much to the disgust of Herr Teufelfisch, who, before he sailed for Europe, had sent a touching appeal to Mother Ursula, in the name of Art to forbid the banns. Mother Ursula favored him with her opinion of his selfishness, and sent Walter and Katharine a pearl rosary as their best consolation. Devine was the groomsman, of course, and little Maria Rodrigues bore roses before the bride. Mrs. Sherwood had gone to Paris, so the bride was married from the house of the Careys. None of the fashionable people, except the Percivals, were invited to the nuptial Mass or to the breakfast afterwards. Herr Teufelfisch so far forgot his anger as to send from Vienna an original wedding march, annotated by the great Leschetizky. Mr. Percival went through the forms perfectly, and was loud in praises of the beauty of the ceremony; but he still remains on the threshold of the Church.

Little Maria Rodrigues was very happy.

"Now," she said, "dear Senorita, you will take me to see Broadway, and I shall be your little girl for a time, as I have missed you much."

Mrs. Percival looks on Katharine as on one who had failed in life; but when Wirt came home and entered on a career of the wildest dissipation, and the Lady Alicia described her marriage as "detestable slavery," she was forced to conclude that Katharine O'Conor had been wise to follow a true principle in spite of all opposition.

THE END.

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